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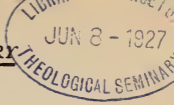




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The knowledge of God



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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

THE LORD BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD

W. Walsham How

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO



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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

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Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, 1888; and in St. John's, Leeds, before the British Association, 1890.

“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”—ST. JOHN xvii. 3.

So spake the Master we follow in His great prayer the night before He died on the Cross; and the Church has taken His words into one of her daily collects, speaking of God, “in knowledge of whom” (that is, of course, ‘in the knowing of whom’) “standeth our eternal life”; as well as into the Collect for St. Philip and St. James’s Day—“whom truly to know is everlasting life.” But men say, ‘We cannot know God: we do not deny the existence of God; but we affirm that, if there be a God, He is unknowable.’ Now let me at once allow that there is a great truth underlying this agnosticism. There generally is a truth at the root of all error; for error is mostly partial or one-sided truth, erring in its ignoring of other truth. It is true, then, that a finite being like man cannot know, with any complete or commensurate knowledge, an infinite Being like God. God is expressly called by us “incomprehensible,” which means, not One whom we cannot understand (whether that be true or not), but One whom

we cannot grasp and embrace, just because the finite cannot grasp or embrace the Infinite. But, because we cannot know God with such a knowledge as could embrace a full and complete conception of that which He is, it does not follow either that we cannot know that God is, or that we cannot know many things about God. Let me tell you a little story, which will help to make my meaning plain. An old weaver in my parish some years ago had much difficulty in believing in the existence of God, because, as he told me, he could not believe in a Being whom he could not understand, and he could not understand or conceive of a Being without beginning and without end. One day, as he lay on the bed from which he never rose again, he told me he was much happier, for his difficulties as to believing in God seemed to have disappeared. When I asked him how this was, he told me he had been thinking about space, and had seen clearly that there could be no beginning and no end of space. He put it quaintly, but with perfect accuracy, thus: "I thought of travelling away from this world into space as far as I could think, and then as far again, and then as far again, and so on till I could think no longer. And then I said to myself, Now where you have come to there must be either something or nothing. If it is nothing, it is no end, but goes on; and if it is something, then (I thought) what is on the other side? So I saw there could be no end to space. And then, though I could not think any farther, I saw how foolish it was to disbelieve in the existence of a Being because He had no beginning or end." Now this old weaver, a man singularly gifted with clear reasoning faculties, saw this much at any rate—that it was unreasonable to deny the existence of God, if there were evidence

of such existence elsewhere, merely because of man's inability to grasp the idea of His infinitude.

But, it is said, there are things as to which we can attain to certainty. We can study physical facts; material things are at least real and true; we can trust the evidence of our senses. And so a Positivist theory is built up, based upon the conviction of the trustworthiness of such evidence as is supplied by our senses. But let us think. Are we sure we know so much about outward objects? Have we really ascertained what an outward object is? Take a tree. You say it is plain enough that the tree is tall, and is covered with green leaves, and has a hard rough stem, and the like. But all you really do know is that an impression, which you describe in this way, is somehow made upon the nerves connected with the retina of your eye. The colour is in your brain, not in the tree. The hardness and roughness are sensations of your touch, but you do not know what produces them. All you can say about the tree is that there is an object there which has certain qualities which produce in you sensations which you have learnt to call height, and greenness, and hardness, and the like. In reality, you can make out very little in any external object except what may be called a sort of core of being, the various things your senses tell you of being in yourself, and not in the thing. You will see that this is so very clearly in the case of sound. There is no sound where there is no ear to hear it. There may be rapid vibrations of the air, but sound is the effect of such vibrations upon a sensitive membrane in the living being. I might draw out this thought much more fully, but I have simply touched upon it to show you that there is as true and legitimate an agnosticism with regard to the physical world and the

things of sense as there is with regard to the spiritual world and the things of faith. In both fields man's finite understanding moves within very narrow bounds, and while he is right in saying he knows, and can know, but little of the true nature either of God or of created things, he is wrong in saying he cannot know God, but *can* know the material things which his senses bring to him.

But, then, while man cannot know the essence and true nature of any external object, but only the phenomena presented to his senses, he can by means of these phenomena know a great deal about external objects, and their relation to himself and to each other. Yes; and so, though he cannot grasp and comprehend the essence of an infinite God, he can, if he has the guidance of any suitable phenomena, know much about God, and His relation to himself. And it is quite possible he may find that the phenomena which seem to him to reveal the existence and attributes of God are as trustworthy in their evidence as those which reveal to him the existence and attributes of material things. For example, I judge of the existence and nature of the tree by the peculiar sensations which the presence of that tree causes in my brain, though I cannot tell what the real essence of that tree is, nor what are the qualities in it which produce the sensations I am conscious of. So I judge of the existence, and of the power and wisdom and goodness, of God, by the impressions produced on my reasoning powers, though I cannot know God's essence, nor understand all His methods and purposes.

Of course all I am so far attempting is, upon the principle of Bishop Butler's "Analogy," to show that it is unreasonable to deny the existence of God because we

cannot grasp the conception of His infinitude, and unreasonable to assert that we cannot know *anything* about God because we cannot know *all* about Him. For the same arguments would lead us to deny the existence of space, and to affirm the impossibility of knowing anything about a tree.

There is surely a true Christian agnosticism which consists in a profound sense of our own ignorance, and of the narrow limits of our faculties, and which, therefore, instead of denying possibilities which lie beyond such narrow limits, and the denial of which requires as large a stretch into the unknown as their affirmation, rather bows in utmost humility, and in childlike teachableness welcomes and accepts the scattered rays of light and leading which fall through its dim boundaries from a more luminous sphere beyond.

O my Father, my Father! Would they, then, tell me I cannot know Thee? Would they shut me into a black dungeon, and forbid me the sunlight of Thy presence and Thy love? I know I am illogical. I know I am calling upon a God, as if I knew Him, when I am trying to show that He is knowable. I cannot help it. Nay, am I indeed so illogical? Are all these yearnings of my soul; these cryings out of my inner self to One in whom I feel I live and move and have my being; this fitness and adaptation of so much of which I am conscious for intercourse with a supreme and Divine and personal Being; this sense of utter want and emptiness except in the assumption of such a Being;—are all these facts of consciousness to count for nothing? Are they fantastic dreams and illusions, born but to vanish with the waking up to a harsh cold awful conviction of infinite nothingness? Nay; explain them

away; tell me how they come; assure me they are self-evolved: but they stand there still; they decline to be philosophized away; they are very obstinate, and cling to my deepest truest self, as parts of my very life and being. I throw them down as facts which have to be dealt with, and which are as well worth weighing as other facts. It would be to me a strange mysterious paradox, almost like some startling contradiction of a great general law of physics, to find that, whereas all other cravings and capacities of human nature have their objects and fulfilments, this alone—the craving and capacity for knowledge of, and intercourse with, a supreme self-existing Being—this, the highest and purest and most ennobling of all such cravings and capacities,—that this alone is objectless, purposeless, meaningless.

I have been weighing and thinking over many arguments, and trying to select such as I might best press upon you in this sermon. Many of these must be familiar enough to those of you who have read and thought on the subject at all. It would be a task of deepest interest to trace out these arguments, even though the treatment of them would be necessarily very brief and imperfect. We might travel back together through the vast unbroken series of effects and causes until we stood face to face with the necessity for some great First Cause of all. We might contemplate the wonders of nature, and deduce from the marvellous adaptation and fitness of things, everywhere discernible, the necessity for an intelligent, and therefore a personal, Creator. We might dwell upon the mysteries of man's inner being, and from the existence of conscience and sense of responsibility, so universally existing, might conclude that we owe allegiance to a righteous Being. We

might note the fact that we are unable to conceive of any power sufficient to originate movement, or, in other words, to start a new series of causes and effects, except that of will, and so might argue for the existence of a supreme all-powerful Will. We might show the way in which all things tend to good, and are meant to lead to highest good at last, and so might gather the beneficence and love of the Ruler of all things.

But I am impatient. I have no love for arguing, and I very much doubt if any sceptic was ever convinced by mere intellectual argument. It is not that I despise the arguments on the other side. I do not undervalue the ability, and the high-minded honest love of truth, which many sceptics show. But my own experience is that argument alone seldom convinces any one. Certainly, if it is to do so, it must be of a very high order—far higher than such as is at my command. I am not presumptuous enough to think myself qualified to deal worthily with the deep and difficult questions surrounding our subject on all sides. And to one who has been brought up in the light and joy and hope of religion; whose best thoughts and motives and longings and endeavours have been ever closely bound up with the truths which some are seeking to deny and to destroy; who is conscious that the whole superstructure of his moral being, terribly imperfect though it be, rests upon these truths, and that upon the rejection of these truths would necessarily follow the collapse of all he holds sacred and worthy and beautiful;—to such an one it is hard to spend much time and thought upon abstract argument and intellectual investigation. It is like asking him to reason out and prove by cold dry logic that he is a living being, who can think and feel and choose.

But in preaching upon the knowledge of God there is one thing the preacher must always be longing to say. He admits how weak and narrow is man's understanding. He freely allows how impossible it is for such an understanding to grasp and embrace the majesty and grandeur of God. Nay, he denies not that, while in the flesh, it must always be a difficulty to conceive a Being purely spiritual (and "God is a Spirit"), and to make real to the mind the existence of a nature so different from, and so far above, our own. Well, but suppose that God knew this difficulty too, and suppose that, knowing it, He designed to make Himself known to men in a new and clearer way through the Incarnation of the Eternal Son? Mind, I am not saying that this is the *only* Divine purpose in the Incarnation. But we are talking of knowing God, and it is not hard to see that, if God could be so united to one of ourselves that through the veil of Manhood we might discern with unblinded eye something of the nature and character and purposes of God, we might know Him far more fully and truly than before. And surely this is so. Not in vain did the Saviour say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also." Yes, we want to know God. Human nature is ever crying, "Show us the Father." Tell us what God is, and what He is like, and what are His relations to us. We have a strange instinctive belief, imbedded in our very nature, ever rising up in vast yearnings after clearer light; ever, even in darkest places, seeking the Lord "if haply we might feel after Him and find Him"; but an infinite Being, omnipresent, omniscient, spiritual, is too far from our daily and hourly experiences for us to grasp and realize. And so the answer comes. God Himself seems to speak from the awful depths of the

light which no man can approach unto :—‘ I know it, My child. It is hard. And I have trained thee through thy infancy to hope and expect and watch for the unveilings of My love. And lo! in the fulness of the times I have sent My well-beloved Son to make known to thee thy God. In Our eternal union We are one—I in Him and He in Me. But lo! He hath become Man; He hath worn thy flesh; He hath lived and died on this lower earth for thee. And He hath shown thee that which I am. He is the Brightness of My glory, and the express Image of My Person. In looking upon His holiness, and wisdom, and love, and tenderness, thou hast looked upon the holiness, and wisdom, and love, and tenderness, of God. In gazing upon His stupendous Sacrifice, thou hast seen the will and the purpose of God for thy salvation. Is it hard to know God? But thou shalt know Jesus. And He is God. “ This is the true God, and eternal life.” ’

And so I lift up my heart once more, and cry, O my Father, my Father! I bow myself before Thee in lowliest adoration, in deepest reverence. I cannot know Thee as Thou art, for I am weak, and blind, and ignorant; while Thou art infinitely great, and wise, and good, and glorious. Yet hast Thou in Thy Divine compassion revealed Thyself in the face of Jesus Christ. I have looked upon Him, and in Him I have seen Thee. O my Father, my Father! I know Thee. Yes, I am bold to say it, I know Thee. I know Thee to be tenderer than any earthly father. I know Thee to be supremely wise and just and true. I know Thee to be a God of love, who wouldest not that any should perish, but that all should be saved. It is true I see “ through a glass, darkly ” now, yet I hope to see “ face to face.” It is true I know but “ in part ” now,

yet I hope to "know even as I am known." But that which I know now suffices to fill me with gratitude and with hope. Thy Son hath spoken, and my whole soul echoes the Divine utterance, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Amen.

THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE.

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Preached in Manchester Cathedral before the British Association, 1887.

“Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.”—2 TIM. iii. 16, 17 (R. V.).

THE Bible is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.” Yes, assuredly; but I do not find that it claims to be profitable for scientific study. The man of God is by it “furnished completely unto every good work.” Yes, assuredly; but I do not discover that he is by it furnished even partially unto the conclusions of philosophic inquiry. I am quite sure that many needless difficulties have arisen from the prevalence of a narrow and mechanical view of inspiration; and that such difficulties would often be removed by a frank recognition of the truth that God allowed the writers of the Bible to write as men, each with his individuality distinctly impressed upon his work; each, while delivering God’s message and guided by God’s Spirit, yet using the ordinary phenomenal language of his day as to matters of science (and, indeed, in no other way would he have been intelligible to his contemporaries); each unerringly led to the truth it was God’s will he should announce for the practical guid-

ance of His people, but not made supernaturally cognizant of the mysteries of the universe, or of the annals of universal history. Do not let us go to the Bible for what it was never meant to teach. That will save us something.

The subject I have taken in hand, namely, *The Bible in its relation to Science*, is so vast that I must try and narrow it by selecting some one point for illustration.

I suppose many of us have been brought up in the old-fashioned belief, which seemed to our forefathers to rest so clearly on the authority of the Bible, that God created man upon the earth as a totally new and hitherto unknown being, essentially different from all other creatures, in full-grown stature and complete moral and intellectual development, about 4004 years before the Christian era. But none of us can be ignorant of modern speculations as to the origin of man of a very different character from this old-fashioned belief. Of all these speculations, the most prominent, as well as the most startling, is that which is propounded by the advocates of Evolution, who hold that all living creatures have been developed out of earlier and less perfect forms; so that, if we had the power to trace the almost infinite links of the chain, we should find man's true origin in the very lowest and simplest creature in which life existed at all, each living thing in succession having the capacity for improvement bestowed upon it, and, by the survival of the fittest in the struggle for life, by the informing agencies of external circumstances, and by other constantly operating laws of nature, being able to develop in long ages into a higher and more perfect type of existence, until at last we arrive at that wonderful being—Man. I am not sure that our best scientific men would hold this theory to be as yet finally established, or to be at present more than a highly

probable speculation. But undoubtedly there are facts and arguments in its favour which it would be silly to despise, and which to many scientific men appear to possess all but conclusive weight.

Now what has the Christian, who believes in his Bible, to say to this?

There are some devout men who will say, 'This and all such-like speculations are straight against God's Word, and therefore utterly untrue and absurd. I cannot even consent to argue about them as if there were any possibility of their acceptance.' Nay, this is not the spirit which is likely to arrive at truth. Have we so utterly forgotten the injury done to the cause of religion by the stolid resistance of the Church in former days to the discoveries of Astronomy as opposed to the Bible? Is it so long ago since we heard silly denunciations uttered against Geology because it taught that the days of Creation signify vast periods of time, and cast doubts on the popular belief that the fossils of our rocks were carried there by the Universal Deluge? We have read our Bibles wrongly before: we may be reading them wrongly now. I have called the language of the Bible upon physical matters "phenomenal," because that language is most evidently not meant to teach scientific truth or to help scientific discovery, but is the language of appearances, describing things (as all language does popularly) not as they are, but as they seem. I presume, if the writers of God's Word had been inspired to speak of things as they are in the truth of God's own Divine knowledge, the mode of speaking would have been wholly unintelligible to man. The speculations of Berkeley, Hamilton, and Mill, to name only a few of the more familiar of our philosophical writers, are sufficient to show how little we know of things

beyond mere phenomena. Thus God's Word, in abstaining from scientific revelations, is simply adapting itself to our understandings, in the same way that it does when it speaks of God Himself in anthropomorphic language, ascribing to Him the members of a human body, that we may see as it were a shadow of His actings on the wall. We have made mistakes in the past by not discerning these things, and interpreting the words of Scripture with an over-rigid literalism. Let us beware lest we fall into the same mistake again. What I plead against is a hasty denunciation of what *may* some day be proved to be founded on truth, a contemptuous rejection of theories which we *may* some day learn to accept as freely, and with as little sense of inconsistency with God's Word, as we now accept the true theory of the earth's motion round the sun, or the long duration of the geological epochs.

But there is another attitude which some take up in regard to these speculations. They say, 'Religion and science occupy wholly different spheres, and need in no way intermeddle with each other. They revolve, as it were, in different planes, and so never meet. Thus we may pursue scientific studies with the utmost freedom, and at the same time may pay the most reverent regard to theology, having no fears of collision, because allowing no points of contact.' I have never been able to understand this position, though I have often seen it assumed. It seems to me that there are, and must be, various points of contact between theology and science, and therefore frequent danger of collision, and that it is foolish to ignore or deny this. No doubt they do revolve in different orbits, but these orbits cut one another at certain points. In other and simpler language, God speaks to us by His Word and by His works; and

while for the most part He speaks of different matters in these His two great languages, it is not always so. Sometimes he tells us about the same things in the two languages, and then we are bound to interpret the one by the other, and to be very careful that we do not misinterpret either language.

Now, the origin of man is just one of those matters of which God seems to speak to us in both His languages. It is one of the points of contact, and (as it seems at present) of possible collision. So we are bound to consider the matter very carefully.

Now let me, for argument's sake, suppose the theory of Evolution to be fully established, in the case of man no less than in the case of other living creatures. Let me suppose we are taught, by the teaching of God's handwriting in His works, to look upon man as the latest development of a structure and system of which we trace back the rudiments and gradual growth through ten thousand earlier and progressive forms of life. What then? Why, then *this* was the wonderful way in which "the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground." We then behold God creating by Evolution instead of by isolated and unconnected acts of creative energy.

But surely our Bible teaches us to believe that man was created as a being wholly distinct from the other living creatures of the earth, and by a very special and peculiar exercise of the Divine Will. Can we doubt it? Well, no doubt some do doubt it. But can *we*? For, assuming the theory of Evolution to the full, it can only deal with the material frame, and its powers and adaptations. Let science teach that man is developed from earlier types of life, it can only be as an animal—as a living organism—that he is

so developed. But is this all that man is? Does this embrace our entire conception of man? Is he nothing more than the most highly developed animal upon earth? Nay, my friends, whence came this marvellous spiritual endowment of which you and I are conscious, and which is the essence of our true humanity? What if Darwin can trace in some of the lower animals dim hints—distant approaches—to some of the ruder and almost instinctive peculiarities (as they were once thought to be) of the human race? Does this really help us to bridge over the tremendous gulf between the cleverest of the brutes, and the thinking, reasoning, hoping, planning, worshipping, spirit of man? What if God had chosen to let His creatures ripen by slow degrees into more and more perfect forms, until one was produced which in His wisdom He counted fit for the inbreathing of an immortal spirit? Was this no new creation? What if of all His creatures God selected one to be endowed with His own likeness, and to be exalted into the living soul? Would this have been unworthy of the high place man's creation occupies in the primæval record? To me it seems quite possible to reconcile the theory of physical evolution in the case of man's outward organism (with its mysterious and complicated development of faculties and adaptations) with the dignity which the fiat of the Creator's will has bestowed upon the being whom He made to be a new creature in the splendid dowry of his spiritual and intellectual powers.

You will see that I do not consider even the boldest speculations as to man's origin to be at all necessarily inconsistent with the firmest belief in his endowment with a special gift of God-like spiritual powers, and with a new nature incapable of death; and I found this upon the vast

and profound distinction between the material and the spiritual in man, repudiating to the utmost those materialistic theories which would confound the two, or make the spiritual nothing else but a phase and phenomenon of the material. I believe such views to be refuted by the very facts of human nature, and to be opposed to all that is highest and best and noblest in our nature. I believe there is a whole region of facts which cannot be rationally accounted for by one who sees in man's nature nothing but the material.

Of course I am well aware that I have barely touched one branch of a very large and complicated question. I have desired simply to show that, upon ground on which the Bible and science meet, and where they often seem to speak diverse things, some at least of the apparent diversity may be caused by our own misreadings of either the one language or the other. I have spoken of the misreadings of the Bible, because that is the side on which I am bound to be mainly on my guard. The truest votaries of science know full well that they have to be no less on their guard against misreadings on their side. It is so easy to mistake our own crude interpretations for the very voice of God. After all, we are very ignorant. The wisest are but feeling after real knowledge, and he who has learnt most, and knows most, is generally the one who knows best how little he knows. There is a true sort of Christian agnosticism, which is nothing else but a bowing down in our conscious ignorance before mysteries too vast and high for our feeble grasp. "So foolish was I and ignorant, even as it were a beast before Thee."

Well, I have spoken of points in the border-land where science and religion approach one another. But is there

nothing to be said of the vast regions which lie far as the poles asunder, and in which no point of contact is to be found? We Christians believe we have a whole realm of precious truths and realities wholly removed from the purviews of physical research and scientific classification. Have we nothing to say about this? Shall the astronomer say, 'Come with me, and I will reveal to you stars so distant that the ray which strikes upon your eye has travelled for thousands of years on its way with a swiftness inconceivable since it left its distant birthplace'? Shall the chemist say, 'Come with me, and I will resolve the earth you tread upon, the waters you drink, the air you breathe, into their component elements'? Shall the optician say, 'Come with me, and I will show you the very gases and metals which in their combustion produce the light of Sirius or the Pleiades'? Shall the geologist say, 'Come with me, and I will unveil to your eyes the mystery of the formation of the mighty rocks, and you shall handle the very creatures that lived in the boundless periods of the primæval earth'? Shall the zoologist say, 'Come with me, and I will let you behold the germs and rudiments of the various parts of your own wondrous frame in the animalculæ which your unassisted eye can scarcely detect'? And shall *we* be dumb? Have *we* no like invitation to make? Have *we* no marvels to boast of in the region which we profess to know? Or shall we not say this (and I think there are men of science who will be glad to have this said to them)?—'Come with me, and I will take you into a fair land, and show you things that will make you glad. Perhaps you think the land I speak of a dreamy unsubstantial cloud-land; but come and see. It may be you will find some things in it better than dreams or

phantoms. It may be I can show you there a stream that can wash out the stains that blot a guilty conscience. It may be I can find you there medicines to heal a sick soul. It may be I can guide you to a fountain which will slake the thirst of a fevered spirit. It may be I can show you a light which will guide you safely through a world of peril. Nay, away with allegory. Come with me, and you shall learn how to conquer a rebellious will, and to purify a corrupt heart. You shall gain a strength that shall give you mastery over self, and victory over sin. You shall pass behind the veil of sense, and see the things that are not seen, things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, but from the sight and knowledge of which you shall go back to your science rich with new treasures of wisdom, strong with new life and power, glad with new hope, and worshipping—not Nature, but Nature's God.'



GENERAL LAWS AND ANSWERS
TO PRAYER.



GENERAL LAWS AND ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

Preached in St. Paul's, 1884.

“He hath given them a law which shall not be broken.”—Ps. cxlviii. 6 (P.B.V.).

I WONDER whether it ever struck you how strongly the Bible seems to speak of the fixity and changelessness of the course of nature. The passage from which I have taken my text is very remarkable. The Psalmist is speaking of the works of creation, and his words are these: “He spake the word, and they were created; He hath made them fast for ever and ever; He hath given them *a law which shall not be broken.*” And God Himself is spoken of by St. James as “the Father of lights, *with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning.*” Of course, on the other hand, there are plenty of texts telling us that God does hear and answer prayer; and it is plain enough that St. James never thought of shutting out answers to prayer in what he says about God’s changelessness, for he himself encourages us to pray by the example of Elijah, to whom God granted first drought, and afterwards rain, in answer to prayer. But, if we were to take the passages about the “law which shall not be broken” (the “decree which shall not pass,” as it is in the later translation in our Bible), and

the invariableness of God, apart from other places (which is the way so many people make mistakes in reading the Bible), we might almost think the Bible itself was on the side of those who think it impossible to believe in God's interfering with the course of nature, and so hold it to be foolish to ask Him to do so. Thus even for believers in God's Word there is a difficulty to be cleared up.

But the same difficulty meets us in the study of God's works—the difficulty, that is, of reconciling an apparent uniformity of action with the idea of a providential ordering and governing of events. I wish to make it clear at the outset that I address myself to those who believe in a personal God, and whose idea of God is of a Being of boundless wisdom and power, who created all things. I want to try to find an answer for those who say, 'The more we know of the universe, the more we become convinced that the Creator has established a vast system of laws governing all things, which laws we find to be so absolutely certain and unvarying in their operation that we cannot conceive of any variation in their effects (except, of course, by the interposition of some other equally invariable law). But prayer—or at least some prayer—asks for things which imply an interference with the action of these laws, and so it seems to us foolish to ask such things, or to expect God to grant them.'

I am using the word "law," I am aware, in a rather loose and popular sense. Strictly speaking, a law of nature is simply the formula of the method in which some force of nature is known to act, or, in other words, the expression of the ascertained sequence of cause and effect in the operation of such force. Of course these general laws never vary, and cannot vary, so far as we know. It

is with respect only to the action of the forces governed by these laws that we can really speak of variation.

But, not attempting any needless exactitude of philosophical language, let us think a little about these general laws. It is quite true that the more we know of the universe the more we are amazed at the vastness and unchangeableness of these great natural laws. I suppose the great advances of science in modern times are chiefly to be registered by the discovery of such laws, and of the wonderful way in which they, or perhaps more accurately the forces which they regulate, are linked together. I am not at all afraid of magnifying the grandeur of this system of Law. To my mind the doing so is only the magnifying the grandeur of the Creator's conception. Let me give an example. When the true notion of the solar system as a band of globes revolving round the sun was once established by the Polish astronomer Copernicus, there still appeared to be a number of minor irregularities and diversities in the system, which could be explained on no principle, and seemed to own no law. The orbits of the planets, for instance, were out of the circle they were supposed to follow; their motion was unequal, being different in different parts of their orbits; their distances from each other and from the sun seemed to be ordered by no rule; their periods of revolution differed in a manner that appeared quite arbitrary. It was a wonderful work of God, but for a large number of its phenomena no reason could be given but that God made it so. But at the beginning of the seventeenth century the great astronomer Kepler was enabled, by his profound genius and patient labour, to reduce to law and order much that had before been inexplicable, and to formulate the great laws governing

the movements, distances, and periods, of the heavenly bodies. He rightly held that the solar system is no result of arbitrary arrangement, but an exquisitely adjusted and perfectly regulated machine. And I hold that, in thus demonstrating the grandeur of Law, he demonstrated yet more the Creator's wisdom and power. In the same way a vast stride in the triumphant march of Law was made when Sir Isaac Newton thought out and demonstrated the great law of gravitation, gathering at once under the control of one great law a multitude of scattered phenomena. Let it suffice to say that the task of science is continually to extend the domain of Law, continually to lessen the region of phenomena which are as yet unclassed and unclaimed by this advancing conqueror. I might point out that even in branches of scientific study in which it is less easy to trace the sequence of cause and effect, and in which there appears to be far more of freedom and diversity, as in what is popularly called Natural History, or in Geology, Law is continually asserting itself, continually extending its sway, and multiplying its subjects.

This being so, it is plain that students of nature would be tempted to believe in the universal supremacy of Law. No one can see the phenomena of nature constantly submitting to be arranged and classified under general Laws without being persuaded that this process cannot stop, and that numberless other phenomena will, as time goes on, be proved to be no less governed by such general laws. And then, going a step farther, it is not unnatural for those who in their study of nature have conceived a deep veneration for the grandeur and sovereignty of Law to suspect that all things will in the end be found to own the sovereignty, no class or region of facts escaping from its

masterful sway. And so we find the champions of Law invading even the sphere of morals, and endeavouring to enslave the very phenomena of human motive and action to the same relentless tyranny. Of course, if this is true, and Law is to reign supreme *in all things*, we are landed in sheer fatalism and necessity, and not only is there no room for prayer and answers to prayer, but there is absolutely no room for religion, for moral responsibility, for right and wrong. Law is omnipotent. Law is God.

Against such a result we instinctively rebel. And permit me to say that this instinctive rebellion is no bad argument. We may not be able to explain why or how we arrive at the conclusion ; but, if we feel absolutely sure in ourselves that we are free agents and responsible beings, this conviction may be an ultimate fact of enormous weight in the opposite scale. Tell me that all my thoughts, motives, resolutions, actions, could be reduced to results of complex laws, if only such laws could be brought to light, and I still answer, 'I am free, and I am responsible ; and to deny this is so contrary to my elementary sense of my own being that it is absurd and incredible. If this which you tell me is true, I am no more responsible for my actions than a steam-engine.'

I have been magnifying the power and range of Law. Its power is evermore unfolding itself ; its range is evermore extending itself. And now I would approach again the question which has perplexed many minds. It is this : Does not the unswerving regularity of the action of Law in all the instances in which it is possible to observe it ; does not the progressive unfolding of the vastness of the sweep of Law ; does not the certainty that many more things yet will be classed under Law ; does not the very argument of

analogy itself, which would lead us to reason from the changelessness of God in what we can observe to His changelessness in all things ;—does not all this cast at least great doubt upon the probability of His interfering, at the request of His creatures, with the operation of those forces which He seems to have bound by a law which “cannot be broken” ?

But stay ; we must look around us once again. Are we sure that in our survey of this marvellous domain of Law we are not overlooking any class of phenomena ? I have already hinted that there are some things which rebel against this mighty tyrant’s supremacy, and refuse to own his iron rule. The phenomena of Will are no less real than those of Chemistry or Mechanics, and we are no less bound to take them into account when we are discussing such a question as the present. But, whatever some may say, few things are more certain than that the phenomena of Will—and especially the moral acts which depend for their character upon the responsible exercise of Will—are strangely at variance with the idea of changeless Law. Here, in the midst of a universe in which so much seems to tell of the resistless march of triumphant Law, is a whole region of facts the very first idea of which is the idea of *freedom from law*. No amount of argument will persuade a sane man that he is talking nonsense when he says, ‘I can take the right-hand road or the left, as I please’ ; ‘I can give this money to this cause, or I can refuse’ ; ‘I can speak, or I can be silent.’ You may tell him each separate act is only the necessary result of a combination of previous forces, or of the force at the moment strongest, and that his actions always follow the line of least resistance ; but he is none the less sure that he is a free agent, with a

mysterious power of Will through which he acts. Therefore at once we find at least one class of facts over which Law seems to exercise at most a very limited control.

I wish, next, to point out the importance of remembering that this group of facts—I mean the voluntary—is constantly touching and affecting the other, namely the physical. It is not only that, while one great class of facts or phenomena is obedient to general laws, another great class is not; but the facts which we think of as governed by general laws are constantly being modified and regulated by the action of that one force in nature which most refuses obedience to law, namely, the Will. I am speaking now only of the things we can observe and take account of, and of the will of man. It is quite plain that man's will is continually acting upon, moderating, directing, combining, making use of, those very forces which we see to be in themselves, and apart from any such interference, governed by changeless Law. Let us be clear. We cannot alter a law of nature. The law is not that which acts or produces any result. The law is only the expression of the method in which the various forces around us operate. We cannot alter a law, but we can alter the operation of the force which is regulated by law. Thus it is a law of nature that by the force of gravitation a stone should lie motionless on the ground. By my will I take up the stone, I throw it up, bringing to bear on it other forces sufficient to overcome for the time the action of the force of gravitation. I catch the stone as it descends, again by my will applying another force to correct the action of the force of gravitation. You can all think of a thousand examples. Why, all our wonderful inventions, the steam-engine, the hydraulic press, the electric telegraph, are nothing else but the Will of man

restraining, combining, directing, and utilizing the law-observing forces of nature. So you see we have not only a vast group of facts apparently ungoverned by general laws, but a constant interference with the operation of those general laws by that force which originates this group of facts, namely, the Will.

And now one more step. Look once more around. Can you point in all that you behold to a real origin or starting-point? In the field of natural science you trace link behind link, cause behind effect, the cause itself being the effect of some prior cause, in endless succession. Can you get back to the real origin or starting-point—I mean by observation? Nay, the first link in the wonderful chain at any rate is held somewhere behind the veil. I cannot see it. But stay; it surely is not so in all things. I pass into another region of facts. I take up a nation's history. I read the stirring details of one of its great wars. Again I find myself contemplating a great chain of events, all linked together as causes and effects. But I patiently follow the chain backwards. I come at last to a great deed of wrong. I see a point where all seems to hang on the issue of one man's action. If I place myself in thought at the moment of this crisis, I see the question to be, 'Will he do this wrong, or will he forbear?' A nation's history, a people's welfare, hangs on the issue. The deed is done, and the first link in the chain is in my hand. I cannot get farther back. When I come to the point where a free will makes the choice, and where I know that choice can be made either way, I feel I have reached a real origin or starting-point. Will has set the series of causes and effects in motion, and it is itself a first cause, so far as my observation goes. So now we seem to arrive at this truth, that the only

true origin or starting-point of events, which is within the area of our observation, is the action of a Free Will.

You will note the stages of my argument so far. I showed, first, how vast is the power and range of Law; secondly, that there is a large class of facts which refuse to be governed by Law, and are the result of freedom of Will; thirdly, that the forces which are under the dominion of Law are constantly interfered with in their operation by this strange force, which owns no law, namely, Will; and fourthly, that we are not able to discern by observation any power which can set in motion a train of causes and effects except the Will.

And now to apply these thoughts to the question we are seeking to solve.

We have assumed the existence of a personal God, the Creator of all things, of infinite wisdom and power. The laws of nature are His laws. The forces of nature are His forces. But in the midst of these law-governed forces the Creator has placed a strange force or power which we see to be of a different nature from the rest. In a word, *the God who ordained Law also ordained Freedom*. And this freedom He made to dwell in the Will of His creature Man. Man can choose; Man can originate; Man can make the forces around him his slaves.

But are we to imagine that the Will of the creature is to be free for constant exercise, while the Will of the Creator is to be sublimely passive? Was the Will which created exhausted by that supreme effort? Has it laid by its freedom, while granting man's? 'But,' say some, 'we will grant that *in the sphere of morals* God may interfere by direct exercise of Will, and thus may answer prayer. But this touches not the great inscrutable mystery of the

changelessness of the operations governed by the laws of nature.' Nay; then we would farther answer thus: I by the exercise of my will divert, suspend, direct, combine, the forces which are governed by the great laws of nature. But I am made in the image of God. Even if my Bible did not tell me so, I could not conceive of a God except as the perfection of that which in me is imperfect. I can know no God except One whose likeness I may trace, however dimly, in myself. And this free-will of mine—must not this too reflect something of the Divine nature? Am I able to moderate and apply the forces of nature, and is the God of nature unable? Is *my* will to be a real force in the universe, and *God's* Will none? And so too, once more, when I see whole chains of events, changing the world's history, taking their origin from an act of human will; when I trace in that act of human will a real cause and starting-point of a new chain of facts; am I to doubt that God's Will in like manner, though unseen and unobserved by man, is the true source and origin, not alone of the first launch of the embryo universe into space, but of numberless groups and chains of facts affecting His creatures' welfare, and moderating the destinies of mankind? This analogy appears to me a very cogent argument; and, if the student of the physical world would argue by analogy from the grandeur of the laws which he beholds to the majesty and power of *Law*, so let the student of the moral world argue by analogy from the largeness of the freedom which he recognizes to the force and breadth of *Freedom* as an agent in God's universe.

I do not know that I need say much more. If there be a God, omnipresent and omnipotent, of whose nature and modes of acting we are compelled to form our conceptions

from that which we know of the dim reflection of these in ourselves; whose Will, like the will of His highest creatures on earth, is free, originating when it so pleases, moderating and applying when it so desires, perhaps more often than we think combining diverse forces so as to produce results which we call chance, only working with a power and wisdom and perfection of method far beyond our finite grasp;—plainly it only needs to add one other attribute, that of Love, to make it certain that that Divine Will must order and adapt external things to His creatures' good. And, moral good being the highest good, we are sure that God must govern the world in righteousness, and effect (though we may not know how) all that is necessary for His righteous ends. Nor, I think, is it possible to conceive of such a God as this allowing no intercommunication between the moral beings of His creation and Himself. Dependence upon God is certainly a needful part of man's training, and His love would bind us to Himself by bonds of love and gratitude. So that the scheme whereby the creature asks, and the Creator grants, is a natural and reasonable outflow from the reasoning we have pursued.

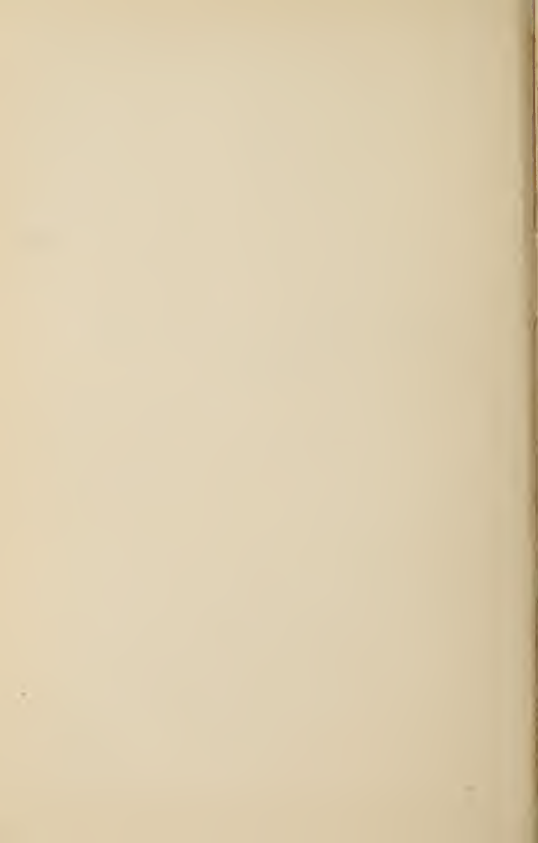
“For what are men better than sheep and goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”¹

To Thee, then, O God, I look up. Yet I tremble at Thy majesty and Thy greatness. For “who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”
“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,

¹ Tennyson, *Idylls, Guinevere.*

the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained ; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him ?" All things are changing here, but Thou changest not. "The fashion of this world passeth away" ; but Thou art "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The grandeur and the changelessness of Thy wonderful laws fill me with profoundest awe. Thou hast made, and Thou ordainest, all things. And canst Thou hear the stammering prayer of me, the least of Thy creatures ? Canst Thou stay in Thy glorious march to notice the worm by the wayside ? Shall I dare in my simplicity to ask Thee to stretch forth the arm of Thy omnipotence to bring me the blessing I crave, or to turn aside the impending evil ? Even so, Lord. Thy laws o nature are strong and wonderful. Yet there is a law stronger and more wonderful still—even the law of Love. I believe Thou lovest the creatures of Thy hand ; for Thou *art* Love. I believe thou orderest all things in love, as in wisdom and power. I believe Thou art ever acting in and with Thy mighty laws and forces. Thou art the Master, and they are Thy servants. And, believing this, I look up ; I adore Thy awful majesty ; I praise and glorify Thy power and Thy wisdom. Yes, but more than this. I look up, and tell Thee of my needs and my desires. Thou knowest all ; yet Thou wouldest have Thy children look to Thee in childlike trust and dependence. O God, Thou art changeless ; yet from Thee, who changest not, cometh "every good and perfect gift." O God, Thou art strong ; yet strongest in the might of Thy Love. Therefore, in lowly faith and loving reverence, we re-echo the ancient cry, "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." Amen.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE
EARTH.



THE TEACHINGS OF THE EARTH.

A Harvest Sermon, preached in Wakefield Cathedral, 1889.

“Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.”—JOB xii. 8.

TEACH thee what? For Job it was the omnipotence of the Creator, the awful, yet mysterious and unintelligible, power and majesty of God.

These are days when men are speaking to the earth, daily, vehemently, persistently. They are asking it all manner of searching questions;—how it was formed; what are its component parts; through what processes it became what we now see it; how it is maintained in its wondrous course and orbit; how it is related to the other heavenly bodies; how it has attained to its adaptation to its present inhabitants; what destiny is in store for it in the future.

You say, ‘But the Bible has taught us many of these things.’ Yes, in the simple grand pictorial ways in which alone man could receive its teachings. But, if the Bible tells us that God is the Creator of all things, if it gives us splendid visions of Creation, if it assures us that God has made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved, yet the Bible never professes to teach Science, or to show the methods by which God plans and orders and effects His

creative acts, or to reveal, preternaturally and prematurely, the wonderful discoveries man is ever making in his study of the material world. The Bible was not given for that. It speaks in the language of the day in which, and of the people to whom, it was written. No other language would have been understood. The Bible is not a Book of Science, but a Book of Life. It does not teach the laws of Nature, but the laws of God. It does not tell us the way in which God fashioned this world, but the way in which we may reach a better. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Well, we are not afraid of speaking to the earth. Why should we be? If we believe it is the work of God's hands, how can it teach anything dishonouring to its Maker? We call the Bible God's Book. Well and rightly do we call it so. We cannot prize it too highly. But God's library has more than one volume. There is, first, the Book of God's Holy Word, *i.e.* the Bible. But there is, secondly, the Book of Nature, "the Earth," as it is called in my text. And there is, thirdly, the book of your own heart and conscience, that which you read when you turn within. And I would study all God's volumes. And, if any one asks me how can I best know all that may be known of God's dealings, and God's will, and God's truth, I would make answer and say, Speak to the Bible, and it will teach thee—teach thee great and wondrous things; teach thee blessed lessons of God's love and mercy; teach thee, above all, "as the truth is in Jesus," the mystery of Christ's holy Incarnation, the "unsearchable riches of Christ." And then, "Speak to

the earth, and it shall teach thee"—teach thee beautiful lessons of law, and order, and harmony, and wisdom, and progress, and submission. And then, Speak to thine own heart, and it shall teach thee—teach thee lessons of righteousness, and justice, and lovingkindness, and unselfishness. And I would add this one word more. I would say, To study one of these volumes without the others is to run a great risk of being one-sided, and of taking narrow and imperfect views of truth.

Now I will not say that in studying these three volumes of God's library, and comparing them together, all will be plain and easy, and that no difficulties will confront you. We are very ignorant, very short-sighted, and very bigoted too sometimes, so that, when God would show us light, we shut our eyes and refuse to see. And yet surely, if God teaches man by all these ways, if all these volumes really belong to God's library, we shall find them interpreting one another, each volume in turn throwing light on the dark places of the others. But I think also, before we find this, we shall most probably often find one of these volumes seeming to contradict another, and God's books teaching diverse things. Let us take a very simple instance. I have already quoted the verse in the Psalms which declares that God has made the round world so sure that it cannot be moved. Now in old times people believed that the earth stood still, and that the sun and all the stars revolved round the earth. Of course, when such was the belief, the verse I have referred to would seem to describe exactly the true fact of the fixity and immobility of this earth. But the great astronomers Copernicus and Galileo spoke to the earth and it taught them. It taught them that men had been mistaken in understanding that verse as affirming the

fixity of the earth as the centre of the universe. We all know the shameful story of the aged Galileo persecuted and imprisoned by the Inquisition, and made, on pain of death, to swear that his doctrine that the sun is the centre round which the earth revolves was false and contrary to Holy Scripture, and that the earth is the centre and immovable. He knew he was right, though he was thus compelled to deny what was so clear to him. And now we all know he was right. His teaching about the solar system is known to every child in these days. But does any one ever dream of any difficulty in reconciling such a verse as that which declares that God has made the round world so sure that it cannot be moved with the accepted facts of Science in this matter? No; we have spoken to the earth, and it has taught us to interpret aright the words of Holy Writ. God's second volume has thrown its light upon His first. Once again, when first Geology became a science, and, founding itself on facts of observation, declared that there was abundant evidence in the rock-strata of long ages of preparation, and of vast periods of progressive life, ere yet the world became the dwelling-place of man, many students of God's Word were staggered and dismayed, deeming such language directly opposed to the record of the Creation in the first chapter of Genesis. But soon it was felt that the days of Creation might picture and represent long periods of time, and now that the teachings of Science have been universally accepted in this matter, the difficulty of reconciling these two handwritings of God has vanished away. Once again, as before, God's second volume has shed its light upon His first, and we know that, when men found the handwriting of the rocks contradicting the handwriting of the Bible, they were misinterpreting,

not God's works, but His Word. God cannot contradict Himself. And when we find what seem to us contradictions in comparing any two of God's volumes, we are bound to suspect that we are misinterpreting either the one volume or the other. So we are not afraid of science. It has often taught us how to understand and interpret the Bible. We have been able, by turning to the second volume in God's library, to correct our mistakes in reading the first.

And may not the same be said with regard to the third volume? I suppose no difficulties in the study of Holy Scripture are more disturbing to many godly students than the imperfect, and sometimes seriously defective, views of morality which find place in the Old Testament. I do not refer to the grave falls of men otherwise held up to admiration, because no thoughtful person imagines such falls to be lightly regarded by a God of righteousness, and their lesson is a very obvious one, namely, the warning that he that standeth must take heed lest he fall. But a seemingly cruel destruction of the nations of Canaan is approved; polygamy is sanctioned; Jael's act of dastardly treachery is praised in Deborah's song of triumph; certain of the Psalms breathe a spirit of bitterness and revenge. What shall we say to these things? Shall we say, If these things are in God's Word, they must be right and good, though we may not be able to understand them? I dare not say this. I should be afraid of injuring the moral sense of my hearers, and teaching them to accept a low standard of moral judgment. I would rather say, Speak to thy heart, and it will teach thee. It will teach thee that absolute purity and justice and charity are necessary elements in the only standard of morality conceivable as that which an all-holy God could set before His children as their aim and ideal.

It will teach thee that the embodiment of such an ideal is that which thy heart has learnt to love in the Person of Jesus Christ. And then once more you will turn to these faulty ideals in God's Word. What can they mean? How can we regard them? Perhaps in taking them to be a revelation of God's standard of morality we have been making a mistake. Yes, surely it is so. Let the light from the third volume in God's library shine upon this dark place in the first, and lo! we discern God's progressive education of His people; lo! we see Him training them to new and higher conceptions, raising the standard as they are able to bear it. In the earlier stages they must learn simple lessons, as little children learn them. The Canaanites are destroyed to teach God's abhorrence of degrading sins; polygamy is permitted until the nobility of woman, and her equality in the sight of God, are secured as the foundation of the sanctity of marriage; Jael's treacherous act is belauded by Deborah, perhaps because the prophetess had herself unworthy ideas of the sacredness of hospitality, and spoke not then as moved by the Spirit of God, but also perhaps because her whole thoughts were centred in the confusion of God's enemies, and in the certainty that God's cause would prevail; Psalms are composed calling down vengeance on the enemy, which at any rate is a step in advance of the old rule of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," as acknowledging that vengeance is not man's but the Lord's. And so the light grows, and through Patriarch and Prophet and Psalmist, stage by stage and step by step, the people of God learn new thoughts of God and God's righteousness, until in the fulness of time they are ready to be shown the full "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

I have kept you long from thoughts of your Harvest Festival; so I come back to my text. "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee"; teach thee first what it taught Job—lessons of the wonderful power and wisdom of the Creator; teach thee to exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches."

But when Jesus Christ walked on earth, He looked round and saw, as we see, fields and trees and corn and flowers. No doubt they spoke to Him of God's power and wisdom. He tells us so. But His eye pierced deeper than this. To Him the earth was always speaking in parable. See how He is ever beholding the inner in the outer, the spiritual in the material. To His rapt eye the two great worlds of matter and of spirit are always running parallel to each other. They are like two great circles one within the other (though which is the nearer and which the farther who shall say?). And those parables of His—the Sower, the Tares and the Wheat, the Seed growing secretly,—what are they but flashes of light, striking here and there across the two great circles, and revealing to us their parallelism? Oh, if we were not so blind and deaf, we should see all nature built up of parables, "all that meets the outward sense" (as Coleridge teaches us) "one mighty alphabet for infant minds," that they may spell out their lessons, and learn "the substance from the shadow":

"But chiefly this—God first, God last, to view
Through meaner forms and secondary things
Effulgent, as through clouds that veil His blaze."

Oh, "speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee"—teach thee many a precious lesson of thy soul's life and growth and destiny; teach thee wonderful things about God's love

and patience and fostering care; teach thee as some gracious teacher of men might teach his earnest thoughtful docile pupil.

“Speak to the earth” once more. Ask it, Has it no teachings for thy spirit, thy highest powers, thy moments of best communing with God? What then this strange thrilling sense of beauty and grandeur, which oftentimes fills thy soul to overflowing? What this voice of mountain, and sea, and starlit skies, and rushing rivers? What this whisper of sweet flowers, and soft sunlights, and blue distance? There are few of us who are quite deaf to these voices, though to some they speak far more loudly than to others; and it is, alas! easy to deaden the ear to them altogether in the harsh din and discord of the world. But what do they say? As one stands alone some sweet soft evening on a mountain-side, watching the splendid sunset lights burn on the shoulder of the slanting scar, or die away in the faint flush of the western skies, what are the voices saying? Not alone that God is great and God is wise, but that God is *good*. Yes, they teach of love. They move to praise. They draw out the purest and tenderest emotions of the heart, and touch the soul with thankfulness. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handywork.” “The Lord is loving unto every man, and His mercy is over all His works. All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee.”

“Speak to the earth” yet again. Ask it what it is, as it rolls on its wondrous way through the fields of space, pursuing its yearly round, and measuring its appointed times and seasons. It will answer thee again, and say, The Lord, the ever-blessed Son of God, has trodden upon

this earthly ball. His footsteps have hallowed and sanctified the spot He has visited. He came to make this earth a better and a holier place. He came to make it (as He *will* make it for those who love Him and serve Him) the footstool of God and the antechamber of heaven.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S
DOUBT.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S DOUBT.

Preached at Windsor, 1887.

“Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?”—ST. MATT. xi. 3.

It has always been a question whether St. John the Baptist sent his disciples to make this inquiry for his own satisfaction or for theirs. The natural sense of the passage would certainly imply the former, and it is best always to take the natural sense when there is no strong reason to the contrary. But there is a reason to the contrary in this case, and a reason that has seemed to many a very strong one. They point to the clear and decided evidence borne by St. John the Baptist to Christ, and they ask, How could one who spoke as John spoke, one who saw the mystic Dove, and heard the awful Voice, and who pointed to Jesus as He passed by, and cried, “Behold the Lamb of God!”—how could he have ever afterwards doubted? This argument seemed to the ancient Fathers so strong that most of them (not all, but most of them) accepted the interpretation which saw in the inquiry of my text a desire to satisfy the doubts, not of St. John himself, but only of his disciples.

But *is* that reason so conclusive? *Is* it so very unlikely

that one, once clear and unshaken in his faith, should at some future time be clouded over and sore troubled with doubt? Is it so unknown a thing for a faith once bright and confiding to be dimmed and daunted in some season of great trial and conflict? Do you, my brother or sister, to whom God has granted in your joyous trusting youth to walk bravely in His light, and never to question the beautiful things taught you at your mother's knee,—do you think it a preposterous idea that a day may come to you when a cloud shall drift across your sky, and a great blank of thick darkness make you sore afraid? It came to Job, when he cried, "Oh that I were as in months past, in the day when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle!" It came to Elijah, when he prayed that he might die, because God's cause had failed, and he, even he only, was left on the Lord's side. It came to David, when he put up that sad moan of a beclouded spirit in the seventy-seventh Psalm, "Will the Lord absent Himself for ever, and will He be no more entreated? Is His mercy clean gone for ever, and is His promise come utterly to an end for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will He shut up his lovingkindness in displeasure?" And why not to St. John? Why not to you, or to me? Modern interpreters have felt this so strongly that they have generally inclined to the belief that it was for his own sake, to dispel doubts which had drifted over his own soul, that St. John sent his messengers to our Lord to ask him, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" I accept this view with my whole heart. The more I know of the troubles which weigh down poor

fainting souls ; the sad—nay, ‘sad’ is not strong enough—the wretched, horrible, torturing, doubts which come not rarely to the best and holiest ; the more I watch the way in which this turbid overflow of doubt is whelming pure and loving souls as it rages by ; the more I thank God for this picture of a noble soul shaken for the moment by the chilling wind of a bitter dismay, crying in a paroxysm of cruel agony, ‘*Can this be He? Should I be left in this foul dungeon, with no help, no light, no deliverance, if this be indeed the Messiah?*’ Yes, I thank God for St. John the Baptist’s doubting, as I thank God for St. Thomas’s. I thank God that the poor storm-shaken soul may say, This is no new trial, no mere outcome of the thought and light and honesty of the truth-searchers of these latter days. Saints of God have known it from the first. Nay, I will go higher. I will stand by the Cross. The King of saints hath known it! I will listen to that cry from the depths of darkness, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Yes, He who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities can be touched even with this. My Saviour has passed through the deepest waters of desolation. And God had not forsaken His well-beloved Son. And He had not forsaken His servants, who cried to Him. Can we not trust in Him, even what time we are afraid?

But stay. It is always well to test any view one may take of a passage of Holy Scripture by the context. Sentiment is no safe foundation for interpretation. And there are two things in the context which should be weighed. First, our Lord’s answer to the two disciples of John. Is this answer what it would have been, had the inquiry been made for *their* satisfaction, and not for his? Why that “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see”? That

he, when they reported these things to him, might answer their doubts, and show them how mistaken they had been? But this Jesus Himself could have done so much better when they stood before Him. If the inquiry had been for *their* sakes, would not Jesus have said, 'Stay, and behold My wondrous works; stay, and listen to My words of power; and then ye will question no more; your doubts will all be ended'? And then, again, how the view I am defending explains our Lord's comments on the character of St. John the Baptist immediately after the two messengers had departed! Those standing by had heard the question. They might very naturally think, This man who was so brave in his preaching in the wilderness, and who was always magnifying Him who was to come after him, has changed his mind; he has been put in prison, and he is turning coward; he cannot bear a little hard treatment. And so the Lord vindicates him from the suspicions which his message and inquiry might tend to produce. He turns to the people and asks them what it was they went out into the wilderness to see. Nay, it was no feeble vacillating character blown hither and thither by every gust of wind; it was no luxurious and self-indulgent man, "clothed in soft raiment," who could not endure suffering and persecution. He was still "a prophet, and more than a prophet"; even the forerunner, who had come to prepare the way of the Lord.

Now I want to say a word as to some of the special causes of the sad trial of doubt. There are many causes. St. John's doubt was born perhaps of low spirits, the result of unjust suffering. Well, it is hard at times to see the light of God's love. In the natural world we often say, 'The sun is not shining to-day,' just because a cloud hides

him from us. But the sun *is* shining all the time just as brightly and warmly as ever behind the cloud, and the cloud is very near the earth. Such clouds pass often across the sky in the spiritual world. I have known three cases of great bereavement which have for a time seemed to blot out all the light of faith. The darkness of desolation was so great that it even hid all the sunshine of heaven. You would think that, just as night reveals the stars, so the darkness of a great sorrow would reveal at least the calm distant light of God. It is not always so. Again, we may have known cases in which the unmerited and mysterious sufferings of a little innocent child have torn from a mother's tortured heart all faith in a God of love. It is the same with some complaints. They produce depression of spirit, which makes the sufferer take a dark and hopeless view, and believe that "there is no help for him in his God." Oh, that bitter cry for light one so often hears go up from poor struggling souls! "Art thou He that should come?" "Tell me. Reveal Thyself. Give me a sign from heaven. "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." O friends, never think or speak harshly of those moaning under the misery of doubt. Treat them very gently, very tenderly, very lovingly. For *voluntary* doubt, indeed, the doubt that is paraded in arrogant defiance, the doubt that is affected in the spirit of bravado, the doubt that is welcomed because sin is loved,—for such doubt I have no tenderness. But for doubt which comes as a trial, doubt which scares and affrights, doubt which fills with misery and dismay,—for such doubt I have only words of sympathy, and longings—ay, longings unspeakable—to help.

I must turn to some thoughts of comfort.

“Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see.” What is this? ‘Go, tell him it is no failure, no blighting of fondly cherished hopes, no bursting of a bubble of prismatic illusions. Go, tell him he may have thought vain things, may perchance have pictured to himself another Messiah, who should come as an earthly king and conqueror.’ (Ah, yes, and we too—how often do we picture to ourselves a king, or a kingdom, such as God has never promised!) ‘But go, tell John of a power in the world which shall be as leaven to work through the mass. Tell him there is victory to be won through suffering. Tell him you have seen the first pledges of the triumph of the kingdom of heaven.’ Is not this just what St. John the Baptist needed to make him strong again? Is not this just what brought back courage and confidence to the Psalmist after his despondent questionings? “I said, It is mine own infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most Highest; I will remember the *works* of the Lord, and call to mind Thy wonders of old time.” Yes, it is a great thing to be able to appeal to facts. “O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.” Go, then, and tell poor doubters, who are wandering in the dark, that Jesus is still the Light of the world, and that in His light they shall see light. Go, and tell the despondent and faint-hearted that God’s arm is not shortened, and that thousands upon thousands have found His strength made perfect in their weakness. Go, and tell the wounded soldier in the great warfare, who has striven and failed, who has resolved and fallen, who cries in despair, ‘The battle is too hard for me,’—go, and tell him that thousands upon thousands have

fought and failed, ay, again and again, and yet have won the victory. Go, and tell the mourner, shuddering in the dark, and unable to see the light of God's love, that the dark cloud has a pavement of gold above, and that multitudes have learnt by blessed experience that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Go, and tell the heart-broken mother, as she watches her little one's sufferings, and cries, 'Can God be love?' that, if we could only conceive of eternity, the longest and weariest affliction would seem "but for a moment"; that at least suffering is a thousand times better than sin; and that, while God has allowed pain in the world, for many ends not hard to see, and perhaps for some which we shall not see till we see many other hidden things behind the veil, He would defeat His own purposes in allowing pain were He continually working miracles for its abatement.

And now you are perplexed and troubled by all the controversies and contradictions of men, shaken by shifting winds of doctrine, chilled by driving clouds of formless doubt—this "plague-wind of the nineteenth century." Oh, turn to facts. I do not cry down or despise Theology. Theology is most precious as teaching us careful accuracy in dealing with the truth of God. Theology, I say, is most precious; but there is something before Theology, and that is History. You ask, "What is truth?" "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" I will tell you again the things which I have seen and heard. They are these: "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried: the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on

the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." That is not doctrine, but history; not theology, but fact. Yes, the grand old Creed is my chant of faith. I will go to my Lord, my living Lord, my Lord who was dead and is alive again, who came once to save, and will come again to judge; and, knowing how little I know, deeply conscious of my own ignorance and helplessness, I will cry, like the poor stricken father in the Gospel, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Amen.

PROGRESS.

PROGRESS.

Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, New Year, 1886.

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”—EPH. iv. 13.

THE beginning of a new year sets us to retrospect and to forethought. Any one not given over to carelessness will at such a time at least glance back over the year that is past, and ask of what sort it has been, and make some resolutions as to the spending of the year now beginning. Have we gone forward? Do we mean to go forward?

I want to speak to you to-day of progress. Progress is the law of life and of health until we reach maturity; and I do not think any one of us will lay claim to have done with growth and progress because we have reached the goal and can advance no farther. We, at any rate, have not yet come “unto a perfect man.”

The Bible speaks much of this law of progress. It speaks of growing in grace and in knowledge; of growing up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ; of leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ and going on unto perfection; and this “till we all come, in

the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *unto a perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And these and other like passages imply a duty and obligation in this matter of growth.

Irrational things grow. The doctrine of Evolution is an attempt to explain and define the methods of the world's growth. The survival of the fittest implies growth of the race. But irrational things grow in obedience to laws imposed from without. The growth is physical for the most part, and certainly involuntary. But when we come to rational beings, and when the growth is moral instead of physical, the conditions are changed. Growth then depends upon choice—upon the exercise of a conscious will. And this implies a knowledge, both of the end to be aimed at, and also of the means by which that end may be attained. In other words, he that would grow must set himself a goal, and do his best to reach that goal.

What, then, is the goal at which he must aim? It is the "perfect man." It is well to explain that the word "perfect" in this place, as elsewhere in Holy Scripture, is not to be understood in the common popular sense of 'sinless,' but in the sense of mature, complete, full-grown, and lacking on no side. If this is the end to be aimed at, it is very necessary that we should know what this "perfect man" is like. And there is another thing necessary to be known too—namely, what we are now. For we want to compare the one with the other. We can hardly make any very hopeful attempts at growth and progress till we know something both of what we are and of what we ought to be. Nor will it help us to know about the one without knowing also about the other. If you were a doctor, and wanted to cure a patient, it would not help you much to

know all the organs and functions of a healthy body, or to be learned in the nature and uses of the various drugs and medicines which might be applied, if you knew nothing about the constitution or the ailments of your patient. So I want first of all to go to the patient and see what is the matter with him, and then we shall be in a better position to try to set things to rights.

Now the patient is human nature, and each one can judge best about human nature by the specimen he best knows. So I look into my own inner being ; and there I at once discern a great many different feelings, desires, affections, passions, impulses ; likes and dislikes, fears and longings, attractions and repulsions ; each with its own end and object, and all demanding to be satisfied, all wanting to set me to work to gratify them. Some of these seem to want things for myself, and some of them have to do with other people ; some of them are steady lasting things, like love and hatred ; and some are things that come and go, fitful and spasmodic, like anger and the "sinful lusts of the flesh." It is just like a little kingdom with a number of subjects, each wanting and trying to get his own way. But I cannot help being quite aware that some of the subjects of this little inner kingdom are very much better and more trustworthy than others. I feel certain that my Creator did not mean all to be chance and confusion in this inner kingdom. I am certain that I was intended to secure some order and harmony among these clamorous subjects. And what I see at once facing me is the question, how to keep all in order, and to prevent the strongest tyrannizing over the weakest. Well, I see also in this little kingdom certain powers plainly meant to rule. Their very nature and character show this. They can be there

for no other purpose. I see a power called *Reason*, which can tell me of the consequences of my actions, and show me what course of conduct will best lead to any particular end I may have in view, and which will, if I choose to consult it, make known to me a great many things which should guide and govern and keep in order the rest of the subjects of the little kingdom. And then I see another power called *Conscience*, which is always telling me, whether I like it or no, whether I am doing right or wrong. And I cannot understand what Reason is there for, if not to guide and direct; or what Conscience is there for, if it is only to make me uncomfortable, but not to affect or alter anything. Even if I had no Bible, it seems to me I could not doubt that these powers were meant to be masters over the rest, and to exercise authority among them. Thus, if I see in myself, as I am, disorder, misrule, weakness, I also see what points to the remedy. I can understand something of what "a perfect man" might be, in whom the powers and faculties meant to rule bore sway, and in whom all other powers and faculties and feelings and desires were ruled and regulated, and kept each in its place, and each to its proper work. For we must not suppose that any of the subjects in our little inner kingdom are useless, or in themselves hurtful. Each has its own place and its own work, just as each organ and member of the body has. For instance, hatred is there to oppose and resist what is deserving of hatred—the mean and false and foul. Anger is there to exercise indignation against injustice and wrong and cruelty. What is wanted is never to let any one of these faculties usurp a power or place not its own, or overpass its own lawful sphere of work. When all are ordered and apportioned and adjusted and regulated in due

subordination and in perfect harmony, then man is man indeed. Then we understand what man was meant to be. Then man is fulfilling his true nature. For this is human nature perfected. This is true humanity. This is the "perfect man."

Many years ago I was talking with a German in Dresden, and, in defending sensual sin, he used a well-worn argument, saying, 'Does not nature itself bid you indulge yourself?' I am sorry to say I passed the question over with some meaningless words, but I know now what I ought to have said. I ought to have said this: 'By 'nature' I do not understand the passion of the passing moment. I discern something truer, nobler, loftier, in nature. I see plenty of claimants clamouring for indulgence; but I see among them faculties and powers evidently intended to restrain and direct and regulate the others. And my idea of nature is that which my Maker meant me to be. I am sure He did not mean me to be the slave of every passing desire. I am sure He meant me to be supreme in this inner kingdom, that I might crown with authority the rightful ruler, and not some base usurper.' Yes; a true man is one who has learnt to be what God meant him to be—master over himself, able to control all the varied powers within him, strong to repress all that is unruly, disproportionate, undisciplined.

Has any man ever attained to this perfect harmony of being? Yes, One—only One. He who came from the eternal depths of God is alone perfect Man. In Him is nothing distorted, nothing exaggerated, nothing uncontrolled. In Him all graces meet, each perfect, and all adjusted in perfect harmony. Here, then, is the model for imitation, the goal to which all progress of manhood

must tend. The Christ-like man is the true man. True humanity is likeness to Christ.

Now what is true of the individual is true of the nation. A people must grow. Progress is with a nation the law of healthful life. Of course the growth of the many can only be by the growth of the separate units of which the many are composed. There is no such thing as the corporate existence of many apart from the separate existence of each. It is absurd to imagine a nation can grow better if each separate member of the nation grows worse. Yet nations receive a character from the majority, and the individual life coalesces and amalgamates itself into the corporate life. Well, there is, alas! plenty that is wrong and perverted and disordered, both in the body and in the several members. The mutual service, the subordination of the less worthy to the more worthy, the correspondence of the present conditions with the truest conception of the nature bestowed by the Creator,—these are not always conspicuous, either in the little world of faculties and powers and affections within, or in the organization and unity and interdependence of the members of the body politic without. And the remedy—surely this is the working towards the “perfect man.” It is progress—true and solid and healthful progress—that we want.

Now I will tell you what I am often afraid of in this matter of progress. I am afraid of low motives, and a false ideal of humanity. Men see the disorders of society, they see the misery and wrong, and they too preach of progress. God knows I blame not any wild theorist for trying to strike out any scheme which might better the lot of the poor, and make their life a brighter and a more hopeful thing. It is not with their schemes that I quarrel,

however visionary and impracticable I may think them. If only I could believe they would effect the object sought by their advocates, and were consistent with right and justice, I would espouse them eagerly and at once. What I am afraid of is the appeal to the lower motives, and the absence of appeals to the higher. I am afraid of aspirations which busy themselves with external and economic changes, which promise money and ease and leisure, but do not hold up any true and noble conception of humanity. I am afraid of kindling hopes which are bounded by fairer outward conditions, but are not concerned with self-conquest, self-restraint, unselfishness. I am afraid of something like a gospel of greed. Even were the schemes of the Socialists as practicable as I have no doubt their propounders honestly believe them to be, yet they are schemes which demand the utmost self-repression, discipline, honesty, sobriety, diligence. These things must be learnt first, or progress of any sort is a vain hope. No scheme, no system, can be worked by hopelessly unfit instruments. I am speaking of the working classes now, because to them the appeal is made, and they are supposed to be the future organizers and regulators of a regenerated society. I am not forgetting that other classes have to learn much too, and that luxury, idleness, selfishness, or covetousness, on the part of the rich, will assuredly stimulate the very passions we would gladly restrain. Many of us are longing and striving to set before men a high and pure and noble ideal; to build as many bridges as we can over the hateful gulf which severs class from class; to teach the rich and cultured more of sympathy and brotherhood with the poor and ignorant. We believe that all true progress must be based upon high and true

conceptions of manhood, upon self-government, self-denial, modesty, purity, temperance, love.

Yet I am filled with shame and distress as I say these things—as I speak of holding up a high ideal, and teaching purity and self-restraint. For, alas! I know what many a working man would say. Let it be in part from class bitterness, if you will; make all allowance for the unjust, but not unnatural, inference that what comes to light of the few reveals the true character of the many; still many would make answer with a scorn that would burn and sting: ‘Do *you* talk of a high ideal? Do *you* preach purity? We think ourselves at least purer than *you*. We hate your filthy trials. We reject your lofty ideals, for lofty ideals are a sham with grovelling lives. We reject your counsels of purity, for counsels of purity ring hollow in the midst of social rottenness.’ If men so speak, does it surprise you? It is nothing less than a monstrous evil to have all sorts of garbage printed day by day in our papers. There is only one thing worse—namely, that the state of society should make such scandals even for the moment credible. Let me tell you what a number of country lads once thought of these things. It was in a neighbouring parish to my own, and these lads wished to form themselves into a guild which might be a help to them in living better lives. The Clergyman of their parish asked them to draw up their own rules, and they did so, and brought them to him. And one of these rules was, “Never to read reports of divorce trials.” No doubt some will call this prudery. I call it manliness. They knew how such reading stained and polluted their souls, and they would have none of it. And yet we flood the country with this defiling impurity! No wonder the Judge who has tried the latest of these hateful

suits declared that some check must be put upon the publication of such foul details.

But I turn from an unwelcome subject to ask how shall the true ideal of humanity be held up and proclaimed before our people. Not by preaching. There is a better way than that. You may picture your ideal; you may dilate on the beauty and harmony of the "perfect man"; but you will not do much till you can show at least some approach to the embodiment of the ideal in actual life. What we want is the personal, individual contact of the higher life with the lower, that the latter may be raised and bettered. The work cannot be done wholesale. It is a work for patient influence. Thousands who never hear a sermon, and who never read the Bible, can and will read the life of a pure high-minded man. And who should exemplify that life if not the cultured, the thoughtful, the generous, who long to help their less happy brothers, and ask to be shown how best to do so? We tell them it is not by the gift of money, but by the gift of self. It is not by talking, but by living. If many more would follow the pattern of those who in the Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel, and in the Oxford House in Bethnal Green, are living among the working people, learning to know them, making themselves familiar with their thoughts and views and feelings and hopes, mingling with them in their leisure, imparting to them of their own acquirements, but above all showing the living picture of pure generous unselfish unworldly lives, the effect would be incalculable. I am not so foolish as to hold up these young men as patterns of what human nature may attain to. But they may be, and I think they are, samples of men trying to work out their ideal, and to grow towards the "perfect man." Nor,

again, am I for a moment forgetful of the beautiful examples of patience, and generous self-sacrifice, and the dignity of independence, to be met with among the very poor. But it is surely one of the responsibilities lying upon the more educated and the more leisurely to show that they have learnt what is worth learning for themselves, and what is worth teaching to others. Unhappily, those who have the blessings of culture and wealth and leisure are more and more deserting our poorer districts, and so robbing the poor of the purifying and elevating influence they are able, and are meant, to wield. Perhaps this cannot be helped. Yet it is a grave step, and one that should not be lightly taken, to carry to some distant suburb the refining influences which might have shed light and blessing upon many a poorer home.

There are hindrances to progress on many sides, yet I do not despond. There are the sordid lives, the indolent lives, the selfish lives, of rich and of poor. There is the solid power of resistance in the mass of human beings who have no desire to go forward to higher and nobler things. There are the miserable lowering influences of evil-doing in high places. There are (and perhaps this is the greatest hindrance of all) the inconsistencies of professing Christians, putting stumbling-blocks and occasions to fall in the way of the weak brother. Yet I am hopeful. I hold that there is a better, purer, manlier, more reasonable tone pervading our people. I hold that they are making progress in many things. We must not be impatient. Changes in the habits and ideas of a nation are of slow growth. What we have to do is plain. We have to fashion our ideal, to recognize our goal, and then to press on towards it. "Unto a perfect man"—let that be our New Year's motto. It is a high

aim, I know. Let us aim high. A low aim never hit a high mark. And I know not how we are to make progress save by setting ourselves a lofty standard and a pure ideal. We would imitate St. Paul, and "forgetting those things which are behind"—thinking nothing of past achievements—"and reaching forth unto those things which are before," we would "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Yes, it is a high aim for such as we are. But if there are two things which the Bible teaches plainly, they are the misery of what we are, and the grandeur of what we may be,—sin and salvation,—man's fall and man's destiny.

Do I want to see what fallen man is like? I look into my own heart.

Do I want to see what man restored is like? I look on Jesus Christ.

There is my ideal. There is the goal of my ambition. There is the "perfect Man." Therefore I would run my race "looking unto Jesus," and run, please God, better in this new year than in the past; therefore I would press on, and press on more bravely, more resolutely, more earnestly, in this new year than in the past; till I come some day, though I think not here and not yet, "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Amen.

ENDURING HARDNESS.

ENDURING HARDNESS.

Preached in St. Paul's, 1887.

“Thou therefore endure hardness.”—2 TIM. ii. 3.

Is not cowardice a very noticeable danger in religion at the present time? I do not mean moral cowardice, but simple downright unworthy cowardice in the commonest acceptation of the word. There is a distinct tendency to shrink from all that is hard, wearisome, painful. For one thing, we are, in these days of rapid movement, always in a hurry for results; we want to reap as soon as we have sown; we grasp at successes, and set little store upon the labour and pains without which successes are worthless; we are never content to work slowly, and to wait. And this spirit of hurry infects our religion. We must have short and easy ways of salvation. We crave after strong and rapid effects. We want to slay the devil with a blow. Then, again, there is a softness and tenderness in our ways of thinking of and dealing with both ourselves and others which, good and beautiful though it may be in some respects, not unfrequently slides into a hasty resentment at anything painful and laborious. We can't bear to suffer ourselves; we can't bear that others should suffer. This reluctance to admit suffering comes out in many ways. We hear of some sudden and very sad affliction which has fallen upon some dear

friend, and it almost shakes our faith. It seems so hard that one we love should have to endure so much. A sweet young wife, who has brought unutterable happiness and hope into some clouded life, is taken away in her first confinement. We are stunned and amazed. How can a loving Father—so we cry in our Epicurean faithlessness—how can a loving Father permit such a tremendous sorrow? As if God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years, had no purpose and destiny for man save to make his little sojourn here as pleasant and painless as possible! Is not this impatience and resentment at pain and suffering in reality a part of the spirit of unbelief? Is it not an outcome of the growing tendency to concentrate even religious thought upon this life, and to leave the world beyond in vague and dim uncertainty? Were not our fathers braver and stronger in their faith and in their patience? I have no doubt we needed to learn deeper and fuller lessons of God's fatherly love for His children even here; I have no doubt the Church in former generations had somewhat forgotten the teaching of a present Kingdom of heaven, of a great society of the redeemed having at least its temporary home and embodiment here, even if its metropolis be in heaven. But perhaps with some the swing of the pendulum has passed the middle truth, and has carried them into a sort of *religious earthliness*, which over-values and over-cares-for the present. Then, again, it seems to me that the beautiful grace of pity sometimes passes into an undue and indiscriminating horror at all suffering, even when self-caused and the very essential condition of wholesome and abiding restoration. There is so much in the world most piteous, so much that fills one's heart with sorrow and sadness, that

one has sometimes to remember that God has His penalties for wrong-doing, and that it is not always His will that we should make things comfortable for the undeserving. I suppose, again, that the growth of luxury in our day, the manifold and constantly multiplying appliances for comfort and ease, engender a certain softness of character, and make the sterner harder discipline of life more unwelcome. Why is fasting, for example, so rarely practised except in religious communities? There has been, of course, a theological distaste for fasting. May there not in these days be more of a self-indulgent distaste for fasting?

Let us see how God's Word presents the religious life to us. There is surely abundance of evidence that it is not all light and easy. Why this "*Strive*" (the Greek word used by St. Luke here is "Agonize," which implies a fierce and eager struggle)—"*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate"? And remember this gate is at the beginning of the narrow way, not at the end; so that the first step is marked by stern effort. "He that taketh not his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me," said the Master; and I think the cross does not mean a plaything or a pretty ornament. I think it means something heavy and hard and rough. *His* cross was; and He must have been looking forward to that, and drawing His figure of speech from that, when He spoke of the servant taking up his cross to follow Him. Then His followers are not promised worldly ease and comfort. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And so St. Paul went through the cities where he had himself suffered so many things—Lystra, Iconium, Antioch,—telling his disciples that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven. But we scarcely want separate sayings. The whole tenor and

bearing of Bible teaching is one unbroken witness to the truth I am trying to impress—namely, that religion implies something hard and toilsome. Why is the Christian life compared to a race, in which there is struggle and contest in order to win the prize? Why is it compared to a warfare, in which there is a strong and crafty foe, a battle requiring discipline and courage and patience, a need of well-proved armour and goodly weapons, if we would win the victory? Does it sound as if all were so easy when there are so many exhortations to perseverance, so many warnings against falling back, and when one of the noblest and most valiant of God's champions was rigorous with himself lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway? Then the growth and stages of advance; the leaving the principles, or first steps, of the doctrine of Christ and going on unto perfection; the adding grace to grace, as St. Peter bids us do;—all this tells of toil, effort, patient labour; while all the mystic blessings held out in the Epistles to the seven Churches in the Revelation are promised “to him that overcometh.”

Oh, it is *not* all light and easy. The yoke will become easy by Divine grace in the bearing, but it is a yoke still. The burden will become light by God's mercy in the carrying, but it is a burden still. Let us carry the appeal to our own experience. *Is* all so very easy? We have resolved—many times resolved most likely—to conquer our besetting sins. Have we succeeded? Are they wholly subdued? Do they never give us any trouble now? Alas! our “enemies live, and are mighty.” Sin is very persistent, very obstinate, very importunate. It seems never to give up the contest, never to accept defeat. It may lie passive for a

time ; we may think we have gained the victory ; and then, in an unguarded moment, it springs up, and renews the assault, and the battle has to be fought all over again. See the man of strong passions : how fierce and furious is the onrush, how terrible the struggle, how frequent the wounds and falls ! Or see the man of weak will : how easily his good resolutions are broken, how quickly the temptation gets the advantage over him, how poor and feeble are his best efforts to withstand in the evil day ! Or look at the long patient effort it costs many of God's true children to acquire the habit of prayer. *Prayer is not easy.* It is easy to *say your prayers* ; yes, but that does not always mean praying. To speak from the heart to God, to realize His listening ear, to enter within the veil and set the spirit face to face with the unseen, to take part even attentively (I will not say devoutly or fervently, but even attentively) in a Church service,—is this so easy ? Well, is it not a law running through all life that nothing really great or lasting is achieved without a struggle ? Labour is the condition of success. What is lightly and easily done has very seldom any worthy or abiding fruits. Would the oak tree, think you, be as strong and tough and lasting if it were grown in some conservatory sheltered from every force and action of the outer elements, as when exposed to the boisterous blast and the fierce lash of the hurricane, and hardened and tempered in nature's rough school ?

In earthly callings men are more reasonable. They do not look for success till after years of patient toil. Their first efforts—how poor and unworthy they are ! How they fashion for themselves an ideal, and work on steadfastly towards it ! How they look down on what they did a year or two ago ! They know what it is to forget those things that

are behind. But the Christian—is *he* as painstaking? Is *he* as patient? Is *he* as eager to rise and go forward? Men can toil and struggle. Ah, yes! for an earthly aim. To become a great painter, to make money by a profession, to excel in a trade,—it is worth while to endure something for this. But for heaven, for God, for religion? Well, it really is not worth while taking such a vast amount of trouble here. I don't mean that people say this with their lips; but they do say it with their lives. They say, speaking by their actions, 'It is silly to put one's self about so much in one's religious work. Of course we do not mean to give it up, and entirely neglect it; but really there are so many more important things to attend to, such a demand on our time and thought and effort made by our worldly calling, that it is impossible to give so much attention to the other world.' Ah, yes! there are those who will take infinite pains, who will labour night and day, who will spare no effort, for an earthly end and object, who say as plainly as actions can say it (and I think actions speak louder than words), 'Anything will do for God.' There are those who can be large-hearted and open-handed in their dealings with man, who almost seem to make it a study so delicately to adjust their relations with God as to combine a certain comforting hold upon religion with a minimum of self-sacrifice. My friends, I appeal to your generosity. Is this worthy conduct? Do you really ask for something very easy to do for your Lord? Something very easy? What! when you think of what He has done for you? Can you—dare you—set yourselves in imagination before that one tremendous scene, standing, as it were, with those who stood afar off beholding; can you—dare you—look upon that Form, those bleeding Brows crowned with the

twisted thorns, those sacred Hands and Feet pierced with the cruel nails ; can you—dare you—looking on this, and whispering the thrilling words, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me,” then add these words, ‘And now, O Lord, give me something easy to do for Thee’? Nay, you are ashamed of the very suggestion. I well know what in your better moments you would say. You have your better moments. You know what it is to feel the generous yearning of a grateful heart. And you would say (for it is a better and truer and nobler thing to say), ‘And now, O Lord, give me something hard to do for Thee, that I may prove my love and my gratitude. Give me a cross to bear for Thee, that I may be indeed Thy disciple.’ But, again, we could perhaps do the thing He required if He asked for some deed of heroic self-sacrifice ; we could perhaps take up the cross, if it were a very notable cross, at which mankind might marvel : but when He asks for patient continuance in well-doing ; when He points out some secret fault or self-indulgence to be curbed and conquered ; when he offers us a little homely cross of unheroic and unrequited self-denial ;—lo ! we shrink back and refuse. The task is too hard for us. We want something more to our taste ; something more attractive, something less exacting. Yes, I do not think I am wronging many a professing Christian when I say that he in effect says again and again that shameful thing, ‘O Lord, give me something easy to do for Thee.’ I am not sure that we, any of us, thoroughly recognize the power and peril of spiritual sloth. There is in so many of us—aye, and not least so in those outwardly most active and energetic—a strange averseness to spiritual exertion. It is to many no effort at all to be outwardly active and energetic ; they are always happiest when fully

employed. But it is to many a very great effort to pray earnestly or for more than a very short time, to read devotionally, to practise self-examination, to acquire the habit of meditation. And sloth shrinks from all unwelcome exertion. We are always asking for something easy to do for our Master. Indolence besets us. There is no enduring of hardness, no working out of our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Have I seemed discouraging to-day? Do any say, 'If to much is required of me, I dare not undertake it; it is too hard for me'? Nay, my brother, God knows I would not discourage any. Yet I am afraid of prophesying only smooth things. It is better even to be somewhat discouraged at first by the greatness of the task as we look forward, than to be discouraged afterwards by the discovery that the task is harder than we had been taught to expect. It is better to count the cost at the outset than to be staggered by disappointment in the issue. But, indeed, there is no cause for discouragement. For we are speaking now of the life's work, and not of the first cry of the penitent soul for mercy; we are speaking of the life of obedience, and not of the conditions of pardon and acceptance. I would not for one moment abate your faith in God's readiness to hear and forgive and accept. I do not think Christians in general are half bold enough in their faith and trust. I do not think, as a rule, they realize as they should the freedom and richness of God's justifying grace in Christ. But I would not have any mistake the beginning for the end. I would not have any forget that salvation is a larger thing than mercy and pardon; that Jesus came to save His people *from their sins*,—not from the punishment alone, but from the power, the tyranny, of their

sins. As is well said in the preface to the well-known "*Daily Round*," "God did not send His Son, Christ did not die, the Holy Spirit did not come, that heaven might be filled with pardoned felons; but that earth might be filled with children of God, led by the Holy Spirit towards their Father's home." Oh! do not be content with any little formula which seems to promise a short and easy way of salvation. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," was indeed a most blessed message, a very gospel, to the poor jailor at Philippi; and yet I think he would find his belief in Jesus Christ soon set him face to face with the battle, the toil, the "hardness." What I press is that none should mistake the beginning for the end, or sit down content with the glow and warmth and blessedness which God in His mercy often gives to the returning sinner as he arises and goes in lowly penitence to his Father. The outside portico is not St. Paul's.

And then, once more, we are not left to fight out this battle, to run this race, to endure this hardness, unaided and alone. Has not God pledged Himself that we shall not be tempted above that we are able, but that He will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it? Has not the Lord Jesus Christ told us that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Are we shut out from the strength and comfort of the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness"? No; I do not think we need be discouraged. Let us only be found with our face turned the right way; struggling upwards, however fitfully; fighting the battle, however faint-heartedly; enduring the hardness, however unworthily; and I should be full of hope. I think God will pity our weakness and pardon our failures. I do

not look for high measures of saintliness, or splendid achievements of heroic self-sacrifice and endurance ; for I know the frailty of our nature, by reason of which we cannot always stand upright. But I do look for some honest effort, some true fighting with sin, some genuine reaching forth towards higher things. And I know that what is gained through effort and toil is far more precious than the same reward would be if it could be had without. "No cross, no crown," is a true saying ; and that saint of God spoke nobly, no less than truly, when he cried, "Oh, what a cross to have no cross !" Then be not enamoured of easy ways ; do not put away from you what is hard and unwelcome to the natural man ; do not shrink from planting your steps, if God call you, in the path of pain and sacrifice which the Master trod. "Be very courageous" ; "quit you like men" ; "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

THE HIGHER STANDARD.

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Preached in St. Paul's, New Year, 1888.

“Reaching forth unto those things which are before.”—PHIL. iii. 13.

I THINK the man who wrote these words was a good way up on the heights of holiness. I find some things he says so high and heavenly, and so far above my common way of looking at things, that if I did not know he was a very true man, and a very practical man, I might think him a fanatic, an enthusiast, carried away by his subject, dreaming beautiful dreams which have no place in the ordinary life of men. I know what he says about himself: he is “less than the least of all saints”; nay, he is “chief of sinners”; “not worthy to be called an apostle.” But, whatever he says about himself, *we* rank him high in the ranks of saintliness. It was no common man who had those “visions and revelations of the Lord,” who was “caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words.” Nay, it was no common man who could say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” That alone is a very high and heavenly saying. Perhaps, if we want to see how he soars into the sublime and unearthly, we cannot do better than read the Epistle to the Ephesians, especially the earlier chapters. Indeed, in that Epistle we have a strange

and almost startling blending of the loftiest flights of heavenly aspirations with the most practical enforcement of homely duties. There are verses which, as we read them, sound to us, in our poor dim faith and meagre spiritual attainments, like a voice from within the veil.

Yet this man—so great, so glorious, so heavenly-minded—“reaches forth unto those things which are before.” He is not for one moment content. His motto is always *Excelsior*. He has a standard far above him; an aim which he is a long way from reaching yet. He “reaches forth.”

Now look at a very opposite case. Here is a poor wretched drunkard, who has never had a thought beyond this world, and never a wish for anything better than its low sensual enjoyments. But he has a sickness, and dim vague thoughts of things he has been taught as a child, or has now and then heard spoken of, perhaps in ridicule, come into his mind. He is frightened, and in his fear is asking (ignorantly enough, no doubt), “What shall I do to be saved?” Or shall we say a Mission is held in the place where he lives, and he is reluctantly persuaded to go one night to Church, and, when there, by degrees the simple pleading words of the stranger, who is so lovingly and with such self-evident earnestness delivering the message of his Master to the weary and heavy-laden souls, touch his cold dead heart, and awake a long-unknown desire to reform? He gets a glimmer of a better, purer, truer life. He does not see very far. He has, for example, no conception what sort of a life some gentle pure happy innocent girl, whom he sees in the Church, leads. It is as far out of his sight as the life of an Angel is out of our sight. And yet he has at last got a standard above him. And then he tries. And

then he fails. But he tries again—aye, and fails again. He slips back. He is very weak. What could you expect? Still he tries. And sometimes he succeeds. He is very far from good. People would laugh if any one spoke of holiness in the same breath with such a man. Yet is he not also “reaching forth”?

I have taken two cases at the opposite poles of my subject. There is only one thing alike in them. Each is “reaching forth.” My object in bringing together two such opposite cases is simply to get at a principle for our guidance in entering upon this new year. And the principle I would gather from what I have said is this—that it is a great thing always to have a standard above you, always to aim high, always to have something before to reach forth to.

A book has lately been published, entitled “The Service of Man,” by Mr. Cotter Morison. It is a book which has attracted a good deal of attention, and it is a very sad and depressing book. But I allude to it because in it great admiration is expressed for Christian saintliness. True, the author thinks it is all a mistake; but he thinks it is a very beautiful mistake, and indeed he is quite enthusiastic in his praise of the saintly character. But he asserts that very few are capable of rising to this high level, and accuses Christianity of unreality in exhorting all to be saints, and of discouraging those who might live ordinarily good and useful lives by setting them an impossible standard. Now there is a good deal of truth in what he says about man’s capacity for saintliness. I certainly do not believe all are able to rise to the high level attainable by some. And I quite allow that it is easy to discourage poor weak struggling souls by holding up to them for imitation pictures of saintliness which they feel to be beyond their reach, and which are

very likely beyond the reach of him who draws them too. 'If you tell me,' so many a one will naturally reason, 'I must be like a St. Paul or a St. John, or like any of God's true saints, to be saved, I may as well give up trying at once.' Well, I do not tell them this. I know plenty of people in everyday life, not very saintly, and not likely to become very saintly, who still wish and try to do right. They often do wrong, no doubt, but not of set purpose. They are not gifted with much force of character, or with much resoluteness of will, but they are honestly anxious to lead good lives. There are men of business who must work hard at their calling, mothers of families sadly absorbed in family cares, schoolboys at home for the holidays and full of spirits and fun, girls rather devoted to lawn-tennis, and many others of all classes and occupations, neither very saintly nor very wicked. What are we to say to all these? How shall we counsel them for this new year? No doubt there are a great many things to say, and I might give other counsels at other times. But to-day I want to say this: Set yourselves a standard well above and beyond anything you have yet reached. Aim high. Very likely you will not attain to anything very great. But if you do aim high, and if you do try hard by God's grace to near your aim, you will attain to something beyond what you are now. Let there be the "reaching forth."

I quite admit that God endows His children with different capacities, and that some are able to attain to a higher point in the upward course than others. But I am sure God has given to all power to be better than they are. I think that what God looks for is to see us struggling upwards, "reaching forth." His command is, "Grow in grace"; He would have us "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head,

even Christ." St. Augustine says, "The one perfection of man is to have found that he is not perfect"; and again, "The whole life of a good Christian is a holy longing to make progress"; and again, "If thou sayest 'It sufficeth,' thou art lost."¹ Each one is bound to be at least striving upwards, to have at least his face turned the right way, facing the goal.

And then who shall judge of real success or attainment? Can you or I? See, here is one endowed with every natural aptitude for a holy life, with an intellect quick and powerful in grappling with the great problems of life and being, with a heart full of love and tenderness, with an imagination rejoicing in all that is pure and comely and gracious, blest in all the surroundings of a gentle happy home, which God has in His mercy fenced from the approach of all grosser forms of evil. Let us suppose we are picturing some bright pure devout girl. She seems almost good enough. What more can be wanted? Well, God shows her some steep upward path of self-discipline or of self-sacrifice. What if she halts in quiet self-contentment? What if she makes no effort to rise to the yet higher level? What if she is simply pure and good because it is pleasant to be so? And here is another, a man, we will say, naturally violent in passions, ungovernable in temper, quite without the restraints of cultured refinement or chastened taste. He tries to do right. He hates his vicious outbreaks. Now and then he succeeds. Now and then he fails. He is not one you can respect as a consistent trustworthy Christian. But who shall judge? The world, of course, would give the palm to the former. Are we quite sure that God would? May not the poor weak struggling

¹ See Pusey on Zech. viii. 21.

soul have really made more efforts than the other, and more progress in proportion, when we take into consideration the point from which the start is made, and the relative height of the standard aimed at?

O poor, struggling, failing, dissatisfied, sometimes desponding, souls! I do want to encourage you. I can never bid you be content. But I can never let you despair. I can never tell you there is no hope. While you are aiming higher, and while you are trying, even feebly and fitfully trying, there *is* hope. If I knew that one of you would all your life long go on trying and failing, trying and failing, trying and failing, I should not be afraid of that one being saved. I think God would pity the weakness, and accept the poor efforts, for His dear Son's sake. But if I knew that any one of you would ever give up trying, I should be very much afraid for that one.

I have said that I want to centre our thoughts to-day upon one point. I have been seeking for a New Year's counsel. And I have thought that, if I could show how each one may rise to some higher level, and could encourage even those far down on the mountain-track to take one forward step, and to "reach forth unto those things which are before," I might help some in sore need of help. For I see around me many longing for help; many grieving over their failures; many not aiming very high, and yet really anxious to travel more bravely and more faithfully in this new stage of their journey than they have travelled heretofore. But I must not let you think I am doing more than touching just one point in the religious life. I must not let you think I am forgetting that there are a hundred other things to say. I am speaking to-day of the higher standard as a principle which may guide God's children in

their onward and upward course. I am not speaking of the conversion of the sinner, nor of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, nor of love which is the fulfilling of the Law, nor of redemption through the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, nor of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, nor of sacramental union with Christ, nor of the prevailing might of prayer, nor of the blessedness of holy worship. I myself do not think a sermon is the better for travelling over a vast region, and trying to embrace the whole counsel of God. I have found sermons enforcing, and enlarging upon, some one point of Christian practice or doctrine more profitable to myself, and I think they are probably more profitable to others. Let me therefore hold fast by my design, and once more ask you to bend your thoughts upon the one counsel I have been setting before you to-day. I will ask you to look into your own hearts. How is it? Are there any here content with the low level of the world, avoiding scandalous sins, doing plain and obvious duties, and, for the rest, living as others live, with no genuine desire to rise to higher things, with no honest strivings after self-conquest, faith, purity, devotion? Is this St. Paul's "reaching forth unto those things which are before"? Or are there any here who have seen and known the love and mercy of Christ, who have gone in lowly penitence to the foot of the Cross, and have tasted and seen how gracious the Lord is, who have listened with humble joy to the message of pardon, and then have rested in a fancied security, counting, as it were, that they have "already attained," even if they would not go so far as to count that they were "already perfect," and have therefore ceased to strive upwards, realizing rather their past achievements than the many heights still lying in front and above? Is this

St. Paul's "reaching forth unto those things which are before"?

Nay, my friends, there is assuredly no height in this world where you may stay your steps and say, 'I have attained.'

God open our poor blind eyes to see the height above our head! And God help our poor flagging wills to strive to reach it!

And now comes the question, What is this higher standard to which I would point you? What is this dim scarce-discerned height looming over our heads to which we would reach forth? It has seemed as though to each one it may be a different point—as though each separate climber were to fix his gaze on the one spot above him whither his next efforts must be directed. And this is true in one sense, and my very object has been to encourage the backward travellers by pointing them to the next height above them as that at which they must aim. Yet is it not truer to say that the standard, after all, is one, not many, only seen with differing degrees of clearness? For can the standard really be aught else but the pattern of the perfect Man? Is it not true that He who was born at blessed Christmas-tide came into the world to be not only a Sacrifice for our sins, but also an Ensample of godly life? Is it not true that the everlasting Son, He who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, took our flesh and dwelt among us, that we might behold "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? I know we see very dimly and imperfectly, all of us. But whatever heights of glory and beauty we can trace, as, with half-blinded eyes, we gaze upwards; whatever fair visions of purity and holiness and love and meekness and justice

shape themselves out to our wondering contemplation as we peer into the depths of a light too dazzling for our poor world-encumbered sight; surely these are but partial glimpses of the one all-perfect and all-embracing Pattern. One man discerns one feature, and another another, each seeing as he can. Often he knows not what he sees. He is conscious only of something better and purer and holier than himself. And he wishes to be like it. The greatest saint only beholds the dim reflection of the intense radiance. It needs an Angel's eye to gaze unblinded on perfection. Yes, my poor feeble failing brother, you see something above and beyond. It is all misty and uncertain, yet it stirs your heart as though it were a living presence, and you long to get nearer and to see more clearly. And you shall. For He is there. It is the Son of Man who is unfolding Himself to your gaze. He is manifesting Himself in an ever-new Epiphany. He is showing you what God meant you to be, what is the Divine ideal of humanity. I know that as yet you see only in part, and understand only in part. But thank God for every faintest glimpse of the great Pattern. Thank God if He is showing you but one feature in which you can become a little more like Jesus. Press nearer; ask God to purge your eyesight that you may see more, and you *shall* see more. "He that hath, to him shall be given." "Reach forth unto those things which are before." Yes, travel on with your eyes fixed above. Run your race "looking unto Jesus." I dare say your vision of the great Pattern will be dim and clouded and partial to the end here. But you shall see more and more as you go on. And if now we see through a glass darkly, the day is coming when we shall see face to face; if now we know in part only, the day is coming when we shall

know even as we are known. Wherefore let our resolve for this New Year be that of him who said, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN
DAILY LIFE.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN DAILY LIFE.

*Preached at Dewsbury, before the Co-operative Congress,
Whit-Sunday, 1888.*

“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.”—I COR. xii. 13.

THIS day we commemorate the great outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the little band of expectant disciples at Jerusalem. The Lord, before He left them, had promised “another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth,” who should be with them in His stead; an inner spiritual presence in place of His own outer and visible presence. Indeed, He had declared that it was “expedient” He should go away from them in order that this Divine Comforter might come, implying that this unseen spiritual presence was to be to them something even more blessed and strength-imparting than His own personal presence, strangely dear and precious as that personal presence must have been. The disciples had waited ten days since they saw their Master taken from their head as He went up from the Mount of Olives. They had returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and had believed, and prayed, and waited. And it came. The promise was fulfilled, and “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Now that this Holy Ghost was given in such wise as to confer new and marvellous powers upon the recipients in no way detracts from the fact that the Holy Ghost is, and was given to be, the ordinary guiding, teaching, informing, and sanctifying Spirit in the Church of God. He was to convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. He was to lead into all the truth. He was the Spirit of holiness. And the writers of the New Testament acknowledge Him as the Spirit of adoption, that is, the Spirit which bestows a childlike heart; the Bond of unity; the Inspirer of prayer; the Source of all worthy obedience; the Power which changes into the likeness of Christ. All this shows as plainly as possible that, when we speak of the Holy Ghost and His work in the heart of man, we are by no means to fix our thoughts upon special and extraordinary manifestations of Divine power, nor upon what we usually think of as religious acts and frames of mind; but that the Holy Spirit is for Christians the Spirit which governs and fashions and directs their whole lives and conduct, having to do with their entire character and principles, and being concerned therefore no less with the daily routine of life, and with all ordinary motives and aims and actions, than with things which we count more distinctively religious. Indeed I know no greater mistake than to attempt to draw a line (and some try to draw a very black line) between religion and the daily life. A well-known writer says, "Greatness consists not so much in doing great things, as in doing little things greatly"; and I think we may say, Religion consists not so much in doing religious actions, as in doing common actions religiously. If religion does not enter into all the daily life, governing, fashioning, characterizing, all its many forms and phases;

if it does not make people different in all conditions and circumstances, regulating their commercial transactions no less than their private devotions, interpenetrating their social relations no less than their secret attitude towards God ; it is a sham and a pretence. I know of no such thing as a religion good for the inside of a church and not good for the outside, good for Sunday and not good for Monday, good for hymn-singing and not good for industrial enterprise. Religion is not a tender fragile thing, meant only for gentle women and hours of sorrow and the solitude of the secret closet. It is a strong hardy serviceable thing, meant for the hard rough work, and the strange perplexities, and the terrible problems, of life ; a thing for strong men to carry about with them into workshops and factories and streets and courts ; a thing that has to do with social questions and politics as certainly as it has to do with lying and lust and drunkenness.

The truth is, we want to take the Spirit of Christ into all regions of thought and action far more than we do. It is not only that people draw the silly line I have spoken of between religion and daily life, but even when they do feel and acknowledge that religion, or, let me rather say, the Spirit of God, ought to govern the more secular side of their life, they seem to me very often to stop short at the narrow margin of personal and individual responsibility. They will hold that each man in his dealings is bound to be honest and true and charitable, but they will not carry this into the relations which subsist between bodies of men, or between class and class. Many a man will allow that, if he is guided by the Spirit of God, he must obey the law which says, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." But when it is

a question between class and class, between employers and employed, between producers and consumers, oh! then it becomes rather far-fetched and Quixotic to appeal to this great law of Christian love. So again with justice. There are plenty of persons, by no means devoid of principle, and who would shrink from being unjust to a neighbour, who never think of the possibility of being unjust to a class. And, once again, there are those who at least try to form kindly judgments of individuals, and to find excuses for them if they are to be blamed, who seem to owe no regard to political opponents in this matter of charity, and to think that, while it is wrong to slander a single person, it is at least a venial sin to slander a large number together. Then, besides this inconsistency in the way many feel and act towards others, as though there were no particular duties towards classes and bodies of men, but only towards their separate component parts, it is to be noted that the same man will adopt a very different standard when he thinks or acts as a member of a class from that which he adopts to regulate his private conduct. Plenty of worthy men will tolerate complacently great hardness and even injustice on the part of their own class towards another. No doubt this is generally caused either by simple unconsciousness of the wrong, or by a sense of impotence to do anything to remedy the wrong. Crying wrongs have, [as we all know, been endured for generations, until some philanthropist of resolute persistence has exposed the evil to a half-incredulous public, and then fought hard to obtain redress. We owe an eternal debt of gratitude to those noble minds which, in the face of obloquy and interested opposition, have exposed class wrongs and injustice, and secured amended laws which are now accepted contentedly by all. It is strange

how unmoved Society could be by the horrors of the slave trade, the disgraceful condition of our prisons, or the miseries of our factories and coal-mines, till the trumpet was sounded by a Wilberforce, or a Howard, or a Shaftesbury. I believe there are few things harder than to awaken Society to social wrong-doing. It certainly needs much grace, much wisdom, much patience, much courage, to grapple with class problems and class interests, and I know not how these are to be successfully dealt with except when the beneficent light of Christianity is turned full upon them, and men are moved and guided by the Spirit of God.

I came here straight from East London, where I have lived and worked for eight and a half years, and no one can know East London, even superficially, and sit down content with what he sees. To me it has been a perpetual burden of sorrow and of shame to pass day by day among these crowds of poor struggling hope-forsaken half-starved brothers and sisters. Can it be right? Can it be what God meant? Can it be after the mind of Christ? These poor workers—I know well enough what some of them are; I know their unfitness, their improvidence, their lack of energy and enterprise. No doubt in East London we have a large class whom perhaps it is impossible to do much for. But these poor workers—are they receiving what is just and adequate for their labour? Are they enjoying a due share of the profits of their handiwork? Is capital too strong for them? These and a hundred other questions keep rising up, and filling one with anxious trouble. And *you* are labouring to solve these questions. I should be very presumptuous were I to attempt to deal with any of the confessedly difficult problems which will occupy your Congress this week. I wish to be a learner in your school.

The only right I have to speak to you at all is the general right of a Christian believer, not to speak of a Bishop of the Church of God, to try to bring great general Christian principles to bear upon any matter that may come before him, and to help people to guide their thoughts and deliberations and judgments by the Spirit of Christ; and, perhaps I may add, the slight additional right which may flow from an interest for many years taken in the work and progress of Co-operation, and a belief that in this direction is to be sought the surest and most hopeful remedy for some of our gravest social anomalies. I will but venture so far into the paths which you can tread with so much firmer and more accustomed foot as to say that to me the part of your work which seems fullest of interest, and most pregnant of large and far-reaching results, is that which has to do with productive Co-operation. No doubt this is also the more difficult part of your work. Co-operation in distribution has been, I suppose, sufficiently proved and tested. But there must be great and difficult problems still to be solved, problems as to the proportionate interests of producer and consumer, problems as to the part and power to be assigned to capital, and the like. These questions, so directly and so potently affecting the welfare of our people and the future of our nation, will tax all the wisdom and energy and patience you can command. Perhaps they are questions only to be solved after many experiments and many failures. One thing is very certain—namely, that all great and beneficent social advances are gradual and of slow growth, and that it is madness to hope (as some do) for any real amelioration of the conditions of labour or of society from sudden and subversive change. There are laws of economics, however little some may

regard them in these days, which are too strong for the struggles of revolutionists, and which will take a sure vengeance for a temporary defeat. We might as well expect an earthquake to ripen our harvest, as a social cataclysm to bring happiness and well-being to our people. We must work with, and not against, the great laws which are intertwined inextricably with all our vast and complicated social system. I am not one of those who can speak hard things of the wild dreams of the Socialist. God knows there is excuse enough for him. There are times when, being brought face to face with some of the saddest and darkest aspects of life, one is tempted to welcome any scheme, however ill-conceived or impracticable, which might even give a chance for the bettering of what is so infinitely bad; but your experience and your reason have, I know, taught you the old truth, that "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Each step must be firmly planted ere the next can be safe. Your work is full of lessons of patience and courage and unselfishness.

And there seems to me a very great incidental blessing in the practical embodiment of your ideas, and the working out of your plans. For surely those who learn to combine with their fellow-workers in industrial enterprise, enter thereby a very school of Christian education. Not only do they learn habits of carefulness and sobriety and self-respect; but, much more, they learn habits of mutual consideration, care for the welfare of others, and self-forgetfulness. And this not alone among themselves; for when working-men co-operate in labour, when they stand in the double position of employer and employed, when they represent the interests of capital as well as of skill and muscle, it is obvious that they must learn to know

much of the difficulties and anxieties, of the responsibilities and risks, of other classes than their own. And this should certainly be an assuager of bitterness and a promoter of charity.

I had not meant to touch even so much as I have done upon matters in regard to which I know my own ignorance and inexperience. I seem to have wandered far from the real theme of my sermon. Yet perhaps not so far as may seem. For my subject was the Spirit of Christ in the things of daily life. And it is not hard to discern the Spirit of Christ in work that is planned and undertaken for the good of others, and for the encouragement of all that is best and most unselfish in the relations of man with man. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report . . . think on these things." This is just what I conceive you to be doing. And I call this Christian work. I know very well it may often be done from less than Christian motive. I know that, even if the work itself be after the mind of the Spirit—work permeated and interpenetrated with the great generous unselfishness of Christianity,—yet many a worker may himself personally lack the very Spirit which breathes through the work. God help us all to live more and more in the power of the Divine life, to follow more and more the guidance of the Spirit of Christ! It cannot but be that the separate individual submission to this spiritual influence must come first. It is surely when our own mind and conscience are governed by the Holy Spirit, when we are regulating our life and actions, our motives and emotions, by the Law of God, which He has said He will write in our hearts,—it is

then that we can turn and look with an undistorted eye on the problems which affect our brother-man. Schemes projected and executed by ungodly men are seldom blest of God. Plans of splendid beneficence have little pledge of success or permanence when they are taken up for selfish ends or lower aims. As St. Paul urged his fellow-labourers in the ministry to take heed first to themselves and then to the flock, knowing full well that the flock would starve if tended by a careless or unworthy shepherd ; so I would say to you. Take heed to *yourselves*, and then to your work. "Walk in the Spirit," in all lowliness and humility, in all love and tenderness to others, in all generosity and self-abnegation ; be Christ-like in all ye do and speak and think ; and then shall ye be worthy to be used by God in carrying out His holy will, and bringing light and hope and blessing to your fellow-creatures. Labour on. It is a blessed work ye are engaged in, and it shall have its reward. Ye may not live to see great results from your efforts. Be it so. They will come. It shall be clear some day that this work is the work of the Spirit of Christ.

"Others, I doubt not, if not we,
 The issue of our toils shall see ;
 Young children gather as their own
 The harvest that the dead have sown,
 The dead—forgotten and unknown."¹

¹ Lewis Morris.

RELIGIOUS EMOTION.

RELIGIOUS EMOTION.

Preached in St. Paul's, after the London Mission, 1874.

“ Lord, it is good for us to be here : if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles ; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”—ST. MATT. xvii. 4.

ALTHOUGH there is no necessity to give much heed to the words of one who, when he spoke them, was so startled and confused that he knew not what he said, yet I suppose, in truth, St. Peter was right in the former part of his saying, and wrong in the latter. He was right in thinking it good to have had that moment's ecstasy, to have seen that vision of the excellent glory in the holy mount. He was wrong in wanting (if such were his meaning) to detain those holy beings in their splendour, and to build shrines upon the mountain where the saints, and the King of saints, might still vouchsafe to manifest the glory of their transfigured presence to the adoring eyes of their favoured servants.

I have chosen these words of startled excitement as suggestive of thoughts which have been gathering and shaping themselves, I doubt not, in many minds beside my own during the past fortnight. Within less than that space the walls of this great Cathedral were re-echoing the jubilant strains of that noble *Te Deum*, in which we gave thanks to our God for the great things which we believed He had

wrought for us in our Mission, and whereof we rejoiced. And standing here this day, at the bidding of your Bishop who sent us forth to our work, I find it impossible to force my thoughts into any wholly diverse channel. The Mission is too fresh in its memories, and was to many of us too absorbing in its interests, to be as yet put quite on one side to make room for other things. Its vibrations are still trembling in many hearts. It is still the talk of many tongues.

I am sure that many a Missioner, and many a Parish Priest, has been very earnestly putting to himself such questions as these: How far was the excitement, which, in greater or less degree, could scarcely fail to accompany the mission preaching, a good thing for the souls we have been seeking to win for Christ? And what are to be its fruits? And how far is it to be maintained, or from time to time recalled and rekindled? Our own part in the work must have forced these questions upon us. But we thank our critics too for forcing them upon us. It is good that this whole matter of the use of religious excitement should be honestly grappled with, and thoroughly reasoned out. Those who have shrunk from it and felt its danger have plenty to say for themselves, and it is wholesome (whether we like it or not) to hear both sides. For indeed, when a Clergyman looks on his parish in London, and beholds a festering mass of corruption, vile pollutions of sin infecting the souls of his people as pestilential air infects their bodies, the canker of unbelief everywhere eating its way into all classes, simple irreligion vying in its passive force of resistance to all his efforts with the strength of positive evil,—when he sees all this, and more, he may well be judged leniently if he says, ‘For God’s sake do anything

risk anything, dare anything, if only you can shake men out of their apathy or frighten them out of their sins. We are too bad to be fastidious as to the remedies. We want a drastic medicine.' When our children are dying, we don't discuss the question of daily diet. We ask, 'Is there anything else in the world that might save them?' So, whatever wise things may be said (and there are doubtless wise things which may be said) against the remedy so many have been applying to the plague that is raging in our midst, nothing is more natural than that these counter-arguments should be ignored or resented. They seem so cold and calculating when we see nothing but necessity for vigorous action. It is well, then, that at least we should face them now, and see if we can gather from our own mission experiences, and from the warnings and criticisms of others, any definite principles or views with regard to the value and use of emotional excitement in religion.

Many a soul in this late Mission uttered words strangely like St. Peter's on the Mount of Transfiguration: 'Oh, what a blessed time this is! Oh that it could only last! Oh that this newly kindled penitence and love could be kept from dying away again! Oh that I could always have such visions of my Saviour's face!' Ah, yes! but they that thus spake knew not what they said. There is no difficulty about the simple fact. These vivid emotions are by the law of their being transient. They cannot last. Possibly their very intensity is, roughly speaking, the measure of their evanescence. Souls cannot live and work on day by day with the emotions at high pressure. Now I am far from saying that the Mission in most cases elicited or encouraged any excessive excitement. On the contrary, so far as I can learn, it was marked rather by a tone of

deep and reverent solemnity, by the chastened awe which befits the realization of the presence and power of God. But, though the form into which the emotions aroused by the Mission cast themselves was, I believe, of a far more simple and natural character than many anticipated, yet of course emotions were excited. It was intended they should be excited. And my first question is this: Was it well? We did it with our eyes open, knowing that at least many souls would be roused to a state of emotion which cannot last, which must soon pass away. Was it well? I believe it was well. Not in every case. There are, of course, weak and emotional natures for which the stimulus may have been too strong. But, looking at the matter broadly, I cannot doubt it. I believe it was well.

Why did God bestow upon us the power of religious emotion? It is certain that no power, no faculty, of the soul was given in vain. Each has its proper use and end, its proper exercise, its proper degree, and its proper relation to other powers and faculties. It must be so with religious emotion. It cannot be given only to be repressed and restrained. Observe, we are not dealing with a thing which is only a phenomenon of missions and revivals. God sends this religious emotion to many persons in many ways. Times of deep stirrings of heart and conscience come to most people in the events of their own lives apart from others. One is thus roused to unwonted religious emotion by a season of dangerous sickness; another by a stroke of terrible bereavement; a third by a merciful escape from great peril; a fourth by the stirring words of some book, especially by the power with which oftentimes some verse or passage of Holy Scripture is borne in upon the soul. There are a hundred ways. Now what

is to be said of these occasional times of excited religious feeling? First, no doubt, this—that no man must take religious feeling for religion. But, after that, what? That all such excited feelings are false and hollow and perilous, and must therefore be at once suppressed? That plain simple obedience to God's will is all in all, and therefore all deep emotions are evil and to be avoided? Surely no. Surely the true thing to be said is this—that God gives these periods of stronger feeling as a mighty help to our weak and wavering courage, that they are a spur to the halting obedience, and a goad to the reluctant will. True, these feelings must be guided and regulated and led into practical channels, else of course they will run to waste, and leave behind them only the barrenness of a field over which a flood has rushed headlong in its devastating course. But I am not speaking of ungoverned and fanatical excitement, but of deep and powerful religious emotion, when I say that God gives it (as is set forth with consummate power and clearness in a sermon well known, I am sure, to some of my hearers, upon "The Religious Use of Excited Feelings"¹) to carry us by its force over the earlier difficulties of a new and converted life, or to nerve us to resolutions, and set us upon courses of action, which would probably be impossible to the calculating calmness of dispassionate reason.

But I think these times of unusual religious fervour have another use. They open to the soul visions of a state of love and joy and heavenly-mindedness, which, if afterwards they even turn into nothing but regret and longing, nevertheless leave behind them a blessing. It is good for the weary toiler, too conscious of his dull earthliness, his cold shallow-

¹ By J. H. Newman.

heartedness, the poverty of his faith and hope and love, to be able to say, though sighing as he says it, 'I have known the blessedness of a bright triumphant faith; I have understood what it is to pray with holy fervour; I have realized God's presence and His love; I have felt a true love to my Saviour, and a true longing after His likeness; I have had blissful hopes—nay, almost foretastes—of heavenly joy.' I know what some are thinking. Can it be a blessed thing to have tasted of these heavenly gifts, and yet to have lost their sweetness? Can it be well to say, 'I have known,' when it were so much better to be able to say, 'I know'? Yes, I think it is well. For, if he be wise who says it, he will know that these higher deeper keener feelings cannot be always with him. He will gather up the truths and the duties they have brought to him, as we gather up the bright shells and gem-like pebbles on the seashore when a spring tide has ebbed. These will be kept, when the surging waves that bore them to our feet have retired. He will recognize the swelling of his emotions as the overflow of the river when the sun of God's grace has melted the snows of his chill heart. And he will no more expect the flow of his religious feelings to maintain the fulness and force to which it has at times arisen than he would expect a river to be always at the flood. Let us once realize that these more vivid religious emotions are occasional helps and not permanent states; that they reveal to us what might be but for the weakness and earthiness of our nature, but are in themselves no proofs of high attainments of grace; and then we may thank God for them, and not be afraid or ashamed to say, 'I have known,' when we dare not say, 'I know.'

But now, allowing that vivid religious emotions, and

exalted states of feeling, are not meant to last, but are meant to incite us to renewed penitence and godly resolutions and fresh beginnings, a very serious and a very practical question remains. How far is religious emotion to form *any* part of our daily religious life? Or, in other words, How far are the feelings to be regularly employed in the service of God? We have done with *exceptional* religious emotion. What shall we say as to *ordinary* religious emotion? Is it a good thing or a bad? Assuredly, as I repeat, our feelings were not given us for the purpose of being crushed out. Our religion is not one of mere dry duty. The very fact that *Love* holds so prominent a place in it is a proof that at least some amount of religious feeling is necessary to a true religious life. But I would ask this: If we read our Bibles candidly, does it not seem that a greater amount of religious emotion is expected to find place in the daily life of Christians than is commonly felt, or commonly supposed needful? St. Paul was a most thoroughly practical man, eminently a man of action, always up and doing. He was surely one who would scorn to let feeling take the place of obedience, or to suffer the simple daily duties of life to escape under the cloak of heavenly aspirations and high-flown sentiment. Yet, if anything is plain in his Epistles, it is that a life of duty, however rigid and self-sacrificing, without love, joy, peace,—a life of obedience without emotion—would utterly fail to satisfy him. The heart, no less than the head and the will, must be enlisted in the service of God. I do not think you need turn over many pages of your Bible to find ample proof of this. I would only refer you to one noted passage in the Divine message to the Church of the Laodiceans: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold

nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." Indeed, my brethren, we must not be content with a cold heartless religion. You see that even lukewarmness is hateful to God. We do want our religion lifting up into a brighter sunnier calmer atmosphere. We must not acquiesce in a state of dull slavish obedience. We are not slaves, but sons. We want to know more of that "glorious liberty of the children of God." Our religious life is sadly imperfect till it has become a spring of light and joy in our inmost souls.

Well, thank God, it is so to thousands. Thousands do find in religion the one true secret of peace and happiness. They understand what is meant when it is said of the wisdom, whose beginning is the fear of the Lord, that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

No doubt this happy state, in which religion is really loved as the source of the soul's truest blessedness, is in most cases a state of calmness and rest, a state of quiet inward satisfaction and serene content, rather than a state of tumultuous feeling and rapturous elation of spirit. But it is none the less a state of religious emotion. Emotion does not mean ecstasy. Calm unimpassioned persons who love much church-going, and are earnest and constant frequenters of the means of grace, because these things make them happy, and they therein learn to realize the goodness and love of God, are in reality no less obeying the impulse of feeling than are those who are bowed down to the ground in shame and sorrow for sin under the moving appeals of some mission preacher. Only in the one case the feeling is calm, orderly, habitual, in the other intense and ex-

ceptional. I know nothing more blessed and beautiful than the bright peacefulness of the loving child of God, whose heart, unshaken by violent emotions, simply believes and trusts and loves, and is full of childlike confidence and thankful praise.

But supposing there is in the daily religious life of some more of the element of excitement than I have pictured. Supposing, as must be freely admitted, there are not a few in whom nothing better than a naturally restless disposition, or a craving after continual stimulus in spiritual things, accounts for their enjoyment of many church services, much preaching, and the like. Well, no one will affirm that the motive which actuates such persons is a very high one. I do not suppose that any one would consider the indulgence of their tastes anything very meritorious. Their religious acts must rank far lower than such as are done from principle and a sense of duty (though I do not wish to speak of *these* as so very meritorious). But I come back to the old question, Why did God make us able to enjoy certain things more than others? Why did He implant in us—though far more in some than in others—a craving after what may move and stir, and perchance elevate, the soul? Has, in a word, even excitement no work to do, no end to answer, in the daily Christian life? Take any keen eager impulsive excitable person. May I not believe that God gave such person the power of quick impulse and eager aspiration for some worthy end? And what is that end? Is it to enjoy a ball? or a novel? or a sport? One would almost think so, when one hears people, themselves keenly enjoying all manner of worldly amusements, throwing themselves into them heart and soul, as we say, yet, when they see others as keenly and engrossingly giving themselves to

religious occupations, settling the matter with a self-complacent smile by saying, 'Oh! it is all excitement.' Might it not be a better way of looking at it if they could think and say, 'I don't know how such an one can enjoy so much religion. I only know I don't and can't. I wish I could. I wish I could take delight in high and holy things. I wish prayer were not so much of a task and burden to me. I wish I loved praising God as well as I love many idle amusements. I wish I could feel the same delight in the thought of God's presence as in the company of some earthly friend'? I don't mean to say these idle wishes will do much good, but surely they are truer and better and humbler than the shallow contempt which sets down religious acts and interests to a motive which is assumed to be innocent in respect of this world, but blamable in respect of heaven. But set down, in any particular case, much of church-going, praying, reading, and the like, to the love of excitement, if you must, and I will say, Better so than not at all. Perhaps such a character cannot help acting to a great extent from this lower motive. Well, thank God if it lead into good channels rather than bad ones. At any rate, there is more safety and more hope when excitement takes one to church than when it takes one to a racecourse or a theatre.

My object has been to show that, while we may not trust to the feelings for proof that we are in a state of grace, we nevertheless may not despise the feelings as a help to the religious life, and as one sphere, one part of our being, in which that religious life must exercise itself. God's Holy Spirit claims *all* our being for His own. He not only enlightens the mind, and renews and strengthens the will, but He also sanctifies and elevates the heart's affections ;

not crushing and destroying them, but chastening, purifying, and directing them, turning them away from things below, setting them upon things above. My friends, be not content, I pray you, with a cold dry unloving service. Obey indeed humbly, simply, patiently; but over all your obedience shed the bright and beautiful light of love and joy and peace. Never be satisfied till you really *love* your religion; and by that I mean till you love God the Father who loves you, and God the Son who died for you. St. Augustine said the thing which he most marvelled at was that God loved man so much, and yet that man loved God so little. Do not be d oafraif warmth of religious feeling. Surely we are in greater danger of erring on the side of coldness than on the side of warmth. Let the fountain of your heart's affections flow forth freely and generously. Let your religion be bright, loving, joyous, happy, free. Give your hearts as well as your lives to the Lord who hath given you His heart as well as His life. Break through, if need be, your English reserve and coldness, at least when you are with your dear Saviour. Love Him, cling to Him, trust Him, take Him to your heart of hearts. And, in the gladness and freedom and confidence of His love to you and your love to Him, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

JEREMIAH.

JEREMIAH.

RESOLUTENESS IN THE MIDST OF DISCOURAGEMENT.

Preached at St. Giles', Oxford, 1869.

“Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child.”—JER. i. 6.

No man was ever called to a harder task than the Prophet Jeremiah, and no man ever felt more profoundly his powerlessness to fulfil the task assigned him. His task was to fight a losing battle for forty years, and I know no task harder than that. But there are some spirits for whom the very excitement of a noble strife suffices. Eager, ardent, devoted, endowed with a keen vigorous faith, buoyed up by a vivid passionate hope, such are able to throw themselves heart and soul into the thick of the contest, and to do and dare all things for the Lord's sake. Not so Jeremiah. His character and temperament were very different from this. He is well called the “Weeping Prophet,” not alone from the sorrowful strains of his utterances and the very sadness of the themes he dwells upon, but quite as fitly from the natural melancholy of his disposition. His temperament has been well described as that “which, while it does not lead the man who has it to shrink from

doing God's work, however painful, makes the pain of doing it infinitely more acute, and gives to the whole character the impress of a deeper and more lasting melancholy." Thus from first to last Jeremiah felt—sometimes even to despondency, and almost despair,—the burden of his task. At first it was the magnitude of the task itself, together with the sense of his own powerlessness, which appalled his gentle shrinking sensitive spirit. When first, in early years, called to the prophetic office, his cry is, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child." Yet there was more hope then than afterwards. For this occurred in the reign of Josiah, and the great religious revival of that reign must have filled many a heart with glowing visions of brighter days to come. But, as years went on, the whole prospect began to darken. The nation sank from bad to worse. Those who had looked for much fruit from the good seed sown under the fostering care of the good King Josiah sought for that fruit in vain. And, almost alone, with only two or three faithful friends to comfort him, the "Prophet of tears" went on uttering his solemn warnings, his tender pleadings, his sorrowful laments,—in vain. Few listened, save in wrath. None heeded, save to persecute. Who will blame, when there breaks from him the bitter cry, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth"? Who will not sympathize, when, utterly borne down by the seeming fruitlessness of his weary contest with the hardness and obstinacy of his people, he exclaims, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them"? Who will greatly condemn even that momentary (for it was but

momentary) casting down of the sword and turning aside out of the battle, when, "because the Word of the Lord was made a reproach unto him and a derision daily," he cried, in bitterness of soul, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name"? Nay, scarcely have the words left his lips ere he repels them with a righteous scorn of their weakness, adding instantly, "But His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side." "But the Lord is with me as a mighty and terrible One."

Nobly, my brethren, and gloriously,—nobly and gloriously because *against* the whole leaning of his natural character and temperament, and *against* the whole tide and current of the outward circumstances in which he was placed—did Jeremiah fulfil his mighty mission. When he first started back, as the Word of the Lord came to him, and cried, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child," how did God answer him? "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." And again, shortly after, "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail

against thee ; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." Such was Jeremiah's task. A gentle shrinking tender spirit was set up by God's decree to be a "defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls"! A man of peace, who would have gladly found a lodging-place in the wilderness, where he might spend his days in holy contemplation, apart from the political strivings and convulsions of his doomed land, is to fight his lifelong battle against king, and princes, and priests, and people ! Doubtless they should not prevail against him ; but, then, neither did he prevail against them. The darts of his prophecies seemed showered upon a city whose defences were sterner and stronger than his own. The smittings of his sword seemed to glance off from an iron pillar no might of his could indent. The subtler shafts of his sorrows and woes were vainly spent against the brazen walls of pitiless hearts. And so it went on till the end came ; and beholding at last the city of God laid desolate, and the people carried away into captivity, he poured forth his exquisitely pathetic Lamentations, and wept as one who had lived and laboured in vain. "I am the man that hath seen affliction," he cries. And again, in those most touching words, in which we feel unconsciously the foreshadowing of a yet deeper sorrow and a yet more utter desolation, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

We will leave the prophet weeping, among the scanty remnant of the people left in the villages of Judah, over the miseries of his dearly loved country, yet not unsolaced by visions of future deliverance, and of the days which should come of new and glorious blessedness under "the Lord our Righteousness."

The prophet passes out of sight, but I think we have not looked in vain upon his form as he has marched by in his place in the "goodly fellowship of the prophets,"—a "man of sorrows," like Him he in so many things resembled,—sad yet brave, gentle yet resolute, weeping yet undaunted, "persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed,"—we have not looked upon this noble character in vain, if we have marked in it that wherein it speaks mightily to us in these latter days. We have looked upon a man whose greatness was in this—that he fought the battle God sent him to fight unflinchingly, in spite of his natural shrinking from the strife, and in spite of the seeming hopelessness of his efforts. Am I wrong, my brethren, in saying that such a resoluteness as this is exactly what we most sorely need in these days? Am I wrong in thinking that a shrinking from the battle to which God calls us is a very noticeable feature of our age?

There are many causes for this shrinking from the battle. Some of them seem to belong to the age itself in which our lot is cast. The state of the intellectual atmosphere is against the spirit of resoluteness in religion. There have been ages in which the bent of men's minds was towards a simple unquestioning faith in dogmatic truth. Those who accepted God's service had no doubts to discomfit, no difficulties to perplex them. To affirm and to believe were natural to the age, and the spiritual life had no inward struggle between faith and unbelief to pass through before it put forth its unabated force in action. Now the tendency of men's minds is to receive nothing unquestioned, to go to the root of everything presented to them, to try to solve the difficulties which are seen to lie at the very bottom of the whole question of religion. There is an analyzing and

disintegrating of dogma, which is shaking to its foundation the old structure of accepted truth; and men who desire to believe, as they take up first one and then another of the articles of faith, are dismayed to find themselves face to face (as many assure them) with a 'perhaps.' Now religious resoluteness requires sincere conviction. And the absence among many of sincere conviction is one reason why there is so little resoluteness. I am not now speaking in condemnation of the spirit of the age. It surely has its work to do in the carrying out of God's mighty purposes. I only name it as inimical to that courageous bearing, that unflinching resoluteness, in religion, which is rather to be found in seasons of undoubting and unclouded faith.

Then also, probably rather as another side of the same questioning spirit than as a separate feature, the tendency of these days is to self-contemplation. Men's minds turn inwards upon themselves. The feelings and motives are scrutinized where in other ages the great eternal truths of revelation would be contemplated. This is not an age which can compose a *Te Deum*. Even our very hymns witness to a loss of the grand joyous affirmative spirit of former days, and those are most popular which, in place of the mighty verities of our faith, deal with the inner feelings and self-consciousness of the heart of man. The self-contemplative spirit in religion (full of blessedness of its own though it be) is not that which best braces the character for resolute action. Our present leaning is rather to tenderness than to enthusiasm.

Then there is another very powerful influence at work, which makes religious resoluteness harder than in some other ages. I mean the tendency of high culture and civilization to destroy differences, and to check all displays

of individual character or action, so that it requires a very unusual courage to take one's own line and to follow one's own convictions in any matter. This undoubtedly helps to damp all kindlings of zeal and enthusiasm, so that numbers of men live below their real principles and convictions, and act the hypocrite, not by pretending to be better, but by pretending to be worse, than they really are.

These obvious tendencies of the day in part no doubt account for the fact that even religious men shrink from the hearty self-sacrificing devotion which is so noble and so blessed a thing.

And yet God is in these days calling us all to be up and doing. Side by side with the unnerving, enfeebling, unsettling tendencies of the age, there is a strange spirit of earnestness and reality among us. Men are everywhere working, planning, organizing. None who long to help others can be long without opportunity. If religious devotedness is rare—devotedness, I mean, from purely religious motives—yet philanthropic devotedness, activity of usefulness, generous expenditure of time and labour and interest in the service of others, these, thank God, are not rare. But we want something higher and better than even these. To which one among us all—priest or people, old or young, rich or poor—has not the word of the Lord come with its call to action, like the trumpet-blast which summons to the battle? Ye have all heard it again and again. Your very presence in this church bears witness that ye know that God claims your service, that He has set you your task to do for Him, that he has commanded you to fight manfully in the great battle that is set in array. But when you fairly front the matter, and stand face to face with that which is appointed you, have you no tremblings of heart? Do you

never shrink back faint and frightened when you behold the hardness of the task set you, and are conscious of your own powerlessness to accomplish it? If the prophet's battle against the principalities and powers of his unhappy nation was a hard one for a man of his gentle nature to fight, is your battle against the principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness an easy one for you? Do you never feel like a David before a Goliath, only without David's sling and stone? Are there no moments when you could cry, 'Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot fight this battle, for I am a child'? A child in weakness, a child in ignorance, yet, alas! too often not a child in purity and innocence, what can *I* do to fight the Lord's battle? Cannot I find a "lodging-place" in this wilderness, where I may sit still and be at peace, and let the din and roar of the battle come to me as an echo from the distant plain? Nay, my friends, it cannot be. Children I well know we are, every one. Hard I well know the battle is for our poor feeble arms to fight. I know that our "enemies live and are mighty." But I know this too—that, if we turn aside out of the battle, we turn aside from God, and from Christ, and from heaven. The Captain of our salvation who marched in front of us, and fought the battle for us, and won the victory, said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." Even now are we (children as we are) watching from afar our Captain's fighting. He is far away in the front, but we can see how He wields His sword, and how He smites the foe. And even now are we, in our Lenten fastings and self-denials and self-searchings, learning (however feebly and ignorantly) to wield our weapons that we may the better fight the great battle. But what we want is courage to fight, *though* we be but children; resoluteness

to persevere, *though* our fighting seem in vain. We shall fall again and again. We shall seem to make little advance. We shall sometimes lose ground instead of gaining. But we must still fight on. Let our watchword be this, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." Believe me, there is a sense in which fighting is a greater thing than victory, and trying a better thing than success. Victory may sometimes be awarded to a brief conflict, success may sometimes crown a happy venture. But to strive and struggle on, perhaps a long life through, humbly, patiently, resolutely, achieving little, advancing little, the crown of victory seeming far off to the last; to fight our battle in spite of all hindrances, whether of natural character, or of adverse influences, or of opposing circumstances; to trust, even what time we are afraid;—this, which was what Jeremiah did, is a great and glorious thing. For this may God nerve our poor feeble hearts and hands!

And now let a bright and happy thought crown a subject that has not been without its darker and sterner features. However the sorrows of Zion crushed down the prophet's soul in his latest strains of mourning, he had had his hours of triumph and of joy. He had seen in blessed vision the remnant of God's flock gathered out of all countries whither He had driven them, and brought back again to their fold. "They shall be fruitful, and increase," he had sung, "and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord." And then, with rapt eye gazing down the coming ages, over the nearer triumph of the restored nation, he had beheld the dim yet glorious outline of a larger and grander blessedness, even of the days when a King should reign and prosper, and that King's name "The Lord our Righteous-

ness." And *we* will glory too in the hope that is ours. Even when there are fightings without and fears within, even when with anxious tearful eye we look, as we may perchance have one day to look, upon our Jerusalem, and cry, "Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?"—yea, when we are almost tempted to sit down in despair, and say, "But Thou hast utterly rejected us, Thou art very wroth against us";—yes, even in the darkest days that *can* come, we will still love, still cling to, still labour for, still pray for, our Zion; for "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." Many of us who saw the first dawning of the great Church revival of this generation have lived to own that all our bright hopes have not been fulfilled; yet Jeremiah saw a blasting of every promise in his day, and we see much realized, even if we were once too sanguine. And we believe that of our own beloved Church of England we need not fear to say, "The Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." And then—even if we never behold all we yearn and pray for here—still we gaze wistfully onward, and there, on the faint and far horizon of the everlasting hills, we discern, striking upward, like shadowy spears of fire in northern midnights, the dim radiance of some vast hidden splendour, and we know that beyond, where we cannot see now, but where we shall see at last, there is the everlasting glory which is the effluence of the throne of the Lord our Righteousness.

GOD'S PRESENCE OUR
STRENGTH.

GOD'S PRESENCE OUR STRENGTH.

*Preached at the Consecration of the Bishop of Bedford (R. C. Billing) in
St. Paul's, 1888.*

“The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.”—Ps. xxiv. 1.

WE can surely say this with a far deeper and more blessed meaning in these latter days than could the Psalmist of old. He, indeed, acknowledged and gloried in the sovereignty of Jehovah. He could sing, “The Lord is King; the earth may be glad thereof, yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof.” But, lo! the everlasting Son has visited this lower earth, and has claimed it as His kingdom. To Him is given all power in heaven and in earth. To Him are uttered the prophetic words, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” God “hath put all things under His feet.” And in the mystery of His holy Incarnation the Son of God has hallowed and consecrated the earth on which He condescended to dwell. No man can say that the ground He trod, the flesh He wore, the humanity which He took to himself, are accursed of God and things to be scorned as only of evil. No man can say that the circumstances and conditions of human life, in which He shared, are to be regarded by the Christian

man with fear and suspicion. That human life of His has left its consecration behind. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men," and the light has not wholly passed away. If He came verily "trailing clouds of glory" from God His home, surely there are yet resting on the scenes He visited and the earth He hallowed with His presence some rays of that Divine glory, irradiating and beautifying the world, like the afterglow of a splendid sunset.

But it is not only that the Son of Man came to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return. In bodily presence it was so. In spiritual power He is still and ever present in His kingdom. "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And it is the realization of this presence which is the true strength of all God's servants. This is the great task of faith, for faith is the realizing power. I have been trying to think what is the great need of those called by God to some great work for His Church, and I believe the chief grace they must seek and cherish is that of faith. When we can live with a vivid and abiding consciousness of the presence of the Unseen; when we can look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; when the other world is to us as real and as near as this world; when we can go on our way sure that God is on our right hand so that we shall not fall; then are we strong to do the work of God.

And I suppose the great issue that is being fought out in this age is just this—between faith and unbelief; between a realization of a world of being, of which the senses can tell us nothing, and a blank materialism, which accepts nothing except on the evidence of the senses. The great question of the day is this—Is there a God, present in all

His creation, whose presence we can realize and believe, or must we train ourselves to see the sun shining (as one has said) out of a Godless heaven upon a soulless earth? It is a tremendous issue! I do not think there is any halting-place between. I do not think many souls will ever content themselves with the beautiful dreams of the poet who can resolve all the articles of the Christian faith into a haze of tender light without shape or substance, or with a fantastic religion which, having no God to worship, worships humanity itself. The question will be fought out on broader and, if you please, rougher lines.

But we Christians have not now to begin to work out this question as some new and startling problem. We have been taught and trained to accept the truth and reality of the other world, and to believe in the Unseen. And let us thank God that He has given us this blessed teaching and training. Let us thank God for the truth handed down to us from our forefathers, and for a Church which guards and teaches this truth. What I want to press to-day is the more practical and experimental side of this great matter. We accept the existence of the other world. We say our Creeds, and believe, or fancy we believe, in God in Three Persons, and in the blessed truths we learnt at our mothers' knees. But it is the *realization* of all this that is the matter I desire to urge. It is the *living consciousness* of all this that is so potent to overcome the world. O my brothers, you who are this day to be called to new work and higher office and larger responsibility, let me beseech you to seek with all earnestness this grace of realization, which is nothing else but the grace of faith. You will have much to make you sad, much to perplex, much to cast you down. I know not how you can stand

firm and brave and hopeful except in the sense of God's presence, and in the consciousness that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." There is so much that it is hard to explain in the things around you, perhaps in the secret mysteries of your own hearts and consciences, that you will need this sense of God's presence to give you light and peace. You will often see the ungodly in great prosperity, and God's dearest children in grievous suffering and sorrow; and when you think to understand it all, it will be too hard for you, until you go into the temple of the Lord, and there, perchance on your knees, lay it all before God, and ask Him for light. Then He may speak, and you will listen. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." And He is greater, infinitely greater, than the earth and all that is therein. He has larger purposes and ends than we can know, and He can blend and combine and order and direct all things to His own greater ends and purposes. And here too you will see how little a thing is pain or sorrow or trouble, how absolutely immeasurable in its smallness beside eternity, and you will understand what the Apostle meant when he spoke of "our light affliction which is but for a moment." I use this only as one illustration of the way in which the consciousness of God's presence, and of the awful reality of the Unseen, will help you in meeting the many strange perplexing questions which come to us all. But I should be wrong if I did not remind you, my brothers, of the momentous importance of this sense of God's presence for the even harder struggles of your own spiritual life. I need not urge on you the thought—sure to have been very near your hearts as you have contemplated this day in its approaching—of the necessity for your own personal holi-

ness if you are to help the souls of others, and to rightly guide and govern the Church of God. But how are you to win this personal holiness? How are you to be men of God, going before the flock, marching, as you are bound to march, in the van of God's host? I know not how we can dare to hope for such a spirit and power as shall lead others on the heavenward way except by living in the conscious presence of the Unseen. Many years ago I read a book in which were described the struggles of a young Indian officer to lead a Christian life, and it was there set forth with great force that one of the hardest battles such a young man has to fight is the battle for faith in the Unseen. It may be a hard fight for a young man. I think it is a hard fight for an old one. Yet it is worth the effort, for it is the key to the whole position. When this battle is won there is not much else that need make us afraid.

But I would have you turn in thought for a while to those among whom you must live and labour. Is the thought I have been trying to draw out for the pastor one which concerns not the flock? Nay, I hold that the highest—yes, far the highest—boon you can confer on the poor souls to whom you are called to minister is this very consciousness of another world and of the presence of God. You will say, perhaps, this is advice more fitting to be given to a Parish Priest than to a Bishop, who, from the nature of his office and duties, does not come into such close personal contact with the people. Yet, my brothers, you, if any, should surely give a high and spiritual tone to the whole teaching and ministrations of the Church, and, as you go from parish to parish and from church to church, forget not that you are bound to bring with you such manifest evidence of the reality of your own faith in God as shall make all,

both clergy and people, recognize that the Church of Christ is not a thing of this world, not a mere human institution, but carries with it everywhere its witness to the reality of the Unseen and to the power of the presence of God. Alas! the vast majority of our people are simple materialists—not by conviction, but by practice. What thoughts, what aims, what hopes, do most of them cherish which pass beyond the things of sense? “The world is too much with us”—nay, for these the world is simply all in all. It tyrannizes over them by the persistency of its presence and the imperiousness of its demands. Aye, and for how many are not the mere cares and troubles of life, the misery of hopeless poverty, the wretchedness of sordid living, not to speak of the slavery of horrible sin, enough to blot out all sight of the beautiful and glorious things which are unfolded to the eye of faith? It is truly a great possession when once a poor ignorant earth-bound soul has grasped the conception of a world other than that of sight. It opens out, sometimes with startling suddenness, a magnificent prospect. It seems to endow the soul with new powers. I know how the eye that has been long blind to the light behind the veil is dazzled and confused at the first attempt to see. It at best seems to see “men as trees walking.” I suppose to most of us the vision is dim and distant. We so dwell on this side the veil that our eyes are unused to the light. But I think in that strange mystic half-seen world beyond there is one point on which the soul's eye may rest until it takes shape and distinctness, and becomes a living reality. I think we can at least point to one object, and bid poor helpless souls to see. Yes, in that world of faith we trace the outline of a Form which holds our gaze. It is the Form of the Son of God, our Crucified Redeemer

our Intercessor, our King. It is a blessed thing that we may hold back the great curtain and point to that Divine Person. It is a gracious thing that the great central object of faith is no mere unseen universe, no mere hidden realm of thronging beautiful life and being, but a Person—One on whom we may centre, not alone our gaze, but our devotion; One on whom we may rest, not alone our wonder, but our love. I know of no panacea for the manifold ills of life but this. I know of no teaching which can bring light and hope and peace to the troubled soul but the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and then the teaching of His abiding presence. For we do not tell our people of a dead Christ, but of a living; not of an absent Christ, but of a present. We would pass among them with our glad tidings of great joy. We would bid them lift up their heads from the contemplation of all the sordid littlenesses and follies of this world, and behold the great, generous love of God, and make real to their souls His presence with them. We would lead them aside from the weary cares and crushing sorrows of life, and show them One who sorrowed and suffered, and who can feel for sorrow and suffering. We would tell them that He is reigning over them, and that He is waiting to be gracious to them. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." If we will only let Him, He will make it a fairer and a happier place for us, and it shall be the antechamber of heaven.

And we are now about to enter in within the veil. The holy vows will be taken, the consecrating words will be spoken, we shall call down the Gift which is given in the laying on of hands. And then we shall kneel and seek to realize the Presence. Yes, in His own holy Sacrament

the Lord will be very near to us. It is, perhaps, easier in this sacred hour to realize His nearness. I do not care to question the when or the how. I fear lest the conscious awe of the Presence be marred and hindered by over-defining. After all, human words are so imperfect as exponents of Divine mysteries that it is better to bow in silent reverence, and to say, "The Lord is in His holy temple; let the whole earth keep silence before Him." I dread attempting to be wise above that which is written. May He be known this day—known as present in healing virtue and in saving power—in the Breaking of Bread! May each one of us be able to exclaim, "O my God, Thou art true; O my soul, thou art happy!"

And then we shall pass again into the outer courts. We shall return to all the toils and cares and interests of the world around us. But His Presence shall go with us. We will cherish and cling to the thought in our secret hearts. Whatsoever we may be doing, wheresoever we may go, in the blessed ministrations of God's holy house, in the busy turmoil of multitudinous cares, in the house and in the streets, in solitude and in company, still within the secret chamber of the soul there shall dwell the glad consciousness of a heavenly Presence, cheering, strengthening, comforting; and, as we pass on our way, weary-hearted sometimes with long and seemingly fruitless labours; dismayed and cast down sometimes by the strength and fearfulness of sin; sensible chiefly of our own impotence and unworthiness; there shall come to us, like the echo of some glorious anthem pealing through the soul and flooding it with strength and joy, the grand majestic thought, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

DAILY LIFE HALLOWED BY
THE CROSS.

DAILY LIFE HALLOWED BY THE CROSS.

Preached at Oxford, Lenten Course, 1873.

“I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live.”—GAL. ii. 20.

IT is a strange thing—this Cross, which so interblends itself with all the Christian’s daily life, coming to him at all seasons, from first to last, in all his varying moods and conditions, softening (I will not say saddening) his joys, tempering (I will not say clouding) his sunshine ; a strange mysterious thing ; a thing of simple form, yet full of deep awful meanings ; a thing which signifies shame and suffering, which once signified only shame and suffering, but which now passes on to other and higher and more blessed thoughts ; a thing which enters in some shape and in some degree into his whole life and being ; present often when he knows not ; coming to him sometimes suddenly, unexpectedly, startlingly ; put from him sometimes with eager frightened hands ; worn sometimes secretly close to his heart.

Does a God whose name is Love—a Father whose love to His children passes a mother’s love for her helpless infant—does He delight to stamp on the life He has made the burning brand of shame and suffering? Oh! what

does He mean by this terrible Cross? Is His love all a fable, and is He in reality stern, hard, pitiless? Doth He "willingly afflict and grieve the children of men"? I know how these thoughts will come at times. I know how there are moments when the whole soul resents the idea of the Cross as an element of life. I know how, for example, on some glorious sunny day of Spring, when to the young it is intensity of joy to live, when all is bounding hope, and eager expectation, and the heart seems a very fountain of sparkling delight, the thought of the Cross is shaken off with something of impatient dislike; it seems as if it would be almost a sin to let a shadow fall on what God has made so bright; it seems as if He could not mean that anything of shame and suffering should come in and spoil His own beautiful work. And I know too how tempting it is to the preacher to let his hearers bask in the sunlight of God's glorious love, and to forget to point them to that strange shadow that lies all across the hills and plains. To some, I suppose, this is an especial temptation. They realize with a vivid intensity the breadth and glory of God's Fatherly love; they want to make other hearts feel the warmth and brightness of that love as they themselves feel it; they cannot bear to discourage, to cast down, to repel; the very Cross itself is for them so illumined with heavenly light that they forget its weight and its sharpness and that it can ever cast a shadow on the scene; they feel what a certain writer on spiritual matters says of himself, "I have no eye for darkness; I cannot see anything but light anywhere."¹ Aye, but all the time there is that faint outline of shadow traceable all across the sunlit world, if we will but look, and *God, the loving Father, has put it there.* We do not for one

¹ Faber, *Notes on Doctrinal and Spiritual Subjects.*

moment question His infinite love. We know He will only our happiness. Can we doubt it? He has given His well-beloved Son to die for us; He has heaven in store for us: is not this enough to prove His love? Shall He give us the best of all gifts, and shall we not trust Him for the rest? Is He a God who gives with one hand, and takes away with the other? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" He, whose "good pleasure" it is to give us the kingdom, how shall He send hurt or harm? Nay, we are sure that that Cross, which to our short-sightedness seems sometimes to mar the beauty of life, is held forth to us by the hand of infinite Love; its presence in the life of His children is but a token of His purposes of mercy. The Cross is in very truth an element in the mighty work of restoration, whereby the second Adam is evermore undoing the ruin of the first. Take away the Cross from the life of the Christian, and you have taken away its law, its force, its meaning, its hope, its glory.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." Such is the Christian's profession; such is the Christian's life. The Cross is with him from first to last.

"Crucified" is a strong word. It not only speaks of the Cross; it speaks of a nailing to the Cross, of a dying on the Cross. See how this belongs to the Christian's very calling and profession. It is embodied in his baptism itself. "Baptism doth represent unto us our profession," which is that, as Christ "died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness." Both to the Romans and to the Colossians St. Paul enlarges upon the mystical death and resurrection

of Baptism. We are "buried with Christ by Baptism into death." And I think we may even go farther, and speak of a mystical crucifixion in Baptism, for in Gal. v. 24 we read, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," and in the original language in this place the word for "have crucified" expresses a past and complete act, perhaps more exactly translated by 'did crucify' than by "have crucified," the Apostle speaking of some past occasion on which this crucifying of the flesh took place, so that it is hard to doubt that he is referring to the baptismal vow and profession. In renouncing all the sinful lusts of the flesh the Christian does, in a figure, "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," dooming them to death and destruction, leaving them, as things of death, with that dead self which is buried with Christ in Baptism into death.

But the Cross, which is thus the Christian man's profession, the badge of his baptismal calling, the mark which pledges him to belong to the Crucified One,—this Cross goes forth with him into all his after-life. The crucifying of the flesh is no act done once for all, and thenceforth ceasing. "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live," is no mere formula of the Christian man's profession; it is the summary of his life. "I am crucified" signifies distinctly an abiding state. It is not, 'I have been crucified.' *That* is true of baptismal profession. *This* is spoken of an act stretching onward to the present. 'I have been, and I am, crucified with Christ.' The Cross is with him still. When Jesus said, "If any man will follow Me," He did not say only, "let him *take up* his Cross," but also, "and *bear it after* Me." It marks and stamps and hallows all his daily life.

We must think of this Cross and crucifying. What is it? What does it mean? What does it come to? It can mean nothing less than that there is in us something which must be roughly and sternly dealt with, something which must be slain, put to death at any cost. Well, we know what that is. St. Paul himself tells us plainly enough, when he speaks of "knowing this, that our *old man* is crucified with Christ, that the *body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "The old man," "the body of sin," these are what must die. They are the same as "the flesh with the affections and lusts." Our fallen, corrupt, lower nature, the evil that is in us as our birthright,—this must be crucified, if we would live unto Christ.

But "crucified"—what does this terrible word really mean?

1. It means *death*. A few strokes, a few struggles, will not do. We must *kill* the sin. It must be pursued to the death. Many a one, when roused to see his peril, when brought by the dealings of God's good providence face to face with his sinful soul, will make some resistance, and strike some blows at the enemy. He may repulse the sin for a time; he may turn the edge of its present fury; he may fancy he has won the victory, and that the sin is really slain, and will trouble him no more. Ah! but sin dies hard. It is not David only who has found out that, even though he may confess his wickedness, and be sorry for his sin, yet his "enemies live and are mighty." Because the sin is parried for the moment, we must not think it dead. And a mortal enemy is not really conquered till he is killed. My friends, we must crucify our corruptions as the Jews crucified Christ. They were not content with blows and buffeting

and scourging. These were only the forerunners of death. It was His life-blood they thirsted after. Oh! beware of that snare of a half-repentance, which gives sin a respite and not a death-blow, which cuts the poison-plant down but does not uproot it. To brandish the weapon, and strike a blow now and then at some very daring sin, without intending its death,—to make a pretence of fighting on the Lord's side, while all the time we are secretly parleying with the enemy,—what is this but the sheerest hypocrisy?

2. Next, crucifying must imply a *violent* death. Sin never dies of old age. Some special sin may, but not *sin*. It must die like a young man in the full strength and vigour of youth. Sin dies hard, not only because it has such an amazing power of vitality, but also because it sells its life dear. It fights fiercely before it will really yield. The "strong man armed" will not surrender to a bare summons and show of arms. He must be challenged to mortal combat. A few prayers, a few hurried resolutions, these will not act like some magical incantation, and frighten sin to death. No, it must be killed violently. It is not like a patient lamb, which resists not the knife. It is rather like some savage wild beast, which, when wounded, only fights the more fiercely. But kill it we must. Crucifixion is a violent death.

3. It is also a painful bitter death. Was not our dear Lord's this? Ah, yes! the word itself sends us to Calvary for its interpretation. "The old man is *crucified* with Christ." "They that are Christ's have *crucified* the flesh." St. Paul might have said 'mortified'—simply put to death. He might have spoken of the fleshly affections and lusts as subdued, extinguished, driven away. No; the word is "*crucified*." The other words might well enough express

a purity such as the heathen might aim at; "crucified" belongs to Christianity. It implies not only the act, but the manner of the act. It is a cruel death—crucifixion. But so sin must die. When strong eager lusts and passions thirst and beg for satisfaction, it is like plucking out the right eye or cutting off the right hand to refuse them. Yet it must be done. The nails must be driven through them, and we must be the executioners. Crucifixion is a painful bitter death.

Now I know that I am speaking rather of an aim than of an achievement; that for most of us—shall I say for all of us?—the Cross will not mean all that I have described. I hope also that for some the struggle will not be so deadly and so terrible as I have said, because God's grace has been long strengthening them to do battle with the enemy that is within them, so that the dying of the sin may be a less sharp and painful process—rather the gradual wasting of a foe pierced with many wounds, than the fall of the enemy after a desperate mortal conflict. But this I know, that for all of us the Cross must mean the crucifying of the flesh with the affections and lusts; it must mean the slaying of the evil that is within us. It may be a lifelong work, most probably it will be. It is almost always a slow, gradual, progressive work. Well, supposing it be so; supposing we are almost sure that we shall never gain the final victory here; supposing the old sinful nature proves so strong, so persistent in vigour, that we despair of putting an end to its rebellions; supposing the one result of all our endeavours to slay the fleshly lusts which war against the soul be simply the discovery that, in spite of all, our "enemies live and are mighty";—what then? Shall we sit down in helpless despair, and give up the hopeless struggle? Oh no! this is not the hardness which the "good soldier

of Jesus Christ" must endure. What we are pledged to is to "fight manfully under Christ's banner." We are not pledged to conquer. What the Captain of our salvation expects of His soldiers is that they be found with sword in hand and facing the foe, ever seeking bravely and perseveringly to smite that foe to death. In will, no less than in profession, the Christian must have crucified the flesh, even though in act there be need of a daily crucifying afresh.

Now we must guard against one thing. It is a very common mistake to suppose that the Cross has to do with *great* things, with masterful sins, with fierce assaults of temptation, with acts of heroic self-sacrifice, with habits of painful self-mortification, while its bearing upon little things is forgotten or despised. But daily life is made up of little things. In most ordinary lives occasions of heroic action are very rare. But there is a harder, a braver, a better thing than heroic action, namely the power of the Cross in little common things. We want, not this or that marked action brought under the constraining influence of the Cross, but the whole tenor of the daily life. We want the Cross to be so familiar a thing to us that it should mark and characterize our whole spirit and bearing. We want it to become at last almost an unconscious element in our being, so that it should be simply natural to us to live, not to self, but to God and to others. Habitual self-restraint, habitual self-forgetfulness, habitual reference of all things to the Cross of Jesus, this must be the way in which the Christian's daily life is hallowed by the Cross.

And will this Cross then, entering thus into all our life, mar its brightness and its beauty? Must the life that is overshadowed by the Cross become a stern hard dreary thing? Why, we know full well how often, when God

brings to some life a very heavy cross from without,—the cross of long bitter bodily suffering, or of weary sickness,—there seems to shine around that life a brightness and a peace unknown before. It is surely so in yet more marked a manner when the cross is taken up voluntarily and borne after Christ. I do not say there will be no pain and anguish. If there were none, it would scarcely be a cross. I do not say the path will be all flowers. If it were, it would not be the path in which Jesus walked. But I do say that the way of the Cross is a very blessed, a very happy, a very peaceful way. To be dying to self, and living to God; to be drawing nearer and nearer to the Saviour who, Himself lifted up on the Cross, would draw all men unto Him; to be learning more and more of the beauty of religion, and of the blessedness of the answer of a good conscience towards God; to be growing up, even if it be very slowly and with numberless faults and shortcomings, yet “growing up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ”; to be conquering, even if it be in the midst of many defeats and cowardices, yet conquering step by step the ground occupied by the enemy;—all this is very blessed and glorious. And all this is the fruit of the Tree of Life, of the Cross from which we sometimes shrink so faint-heartedly. Oh no! the Cross brings not with it gloom and darkness. It is radiant with light and hope. If only our eyes were opened, and we saw aright, we should be ready to exclaim, like a saint of old, “Oh, what a cross to have no cross!”¹ We should gladly echo the words of another saint of old who cried, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

¹ “Nulla crux quanta crux!”

THE PERFECT MAN.

THE PERFECT MAN.

“Unto a perfect man.”—EPH. iv. 13.

Preached on the re-opening of Chester Cathedral, 1872.

COMPLETE, full-grown, Christian manhood,—a manhood attaining even to the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,”—this is the end and aim set before our fallen, but redeemed and regenerate, humanity. And whether we regard ourselves as separate individual beings, or collectively as the great family that is named of Christ—whether as Christian men and women, or as the Church of the living God,—it is the same. The individual member, and the body as a whole, is equally meant to advance towards the “perfect man,” towards that state of maturity and completeness, the true measure of which is the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Surely some thoughts upon this great subject of the perfecting of humanity in Christ may well be suggested to us by the very occasion which has brought us together, and the work which we are invited to carry on in this noble building; and perhaps not unfitly may the last words spoken in the present series of services raise the thoughts of the worshipper from the contemplation of the progress of the material building towards that state of com-

pleteness to which it is hoped in due time to attain, to the contemplation of a work greater, nobler, fairer, more lasting—even that of the growth of the spiritual building “unto an holy temple in the Lord.”

The analogies between the material and the spiritual work are very obvious. Each is a *restoration*. Not the devising and developing of something new and as yet unknown, but the searching out and reinstating of something which has been, but which has been marred and defaced and well-nigh obliterated. We do not pull down the ancient walls, and ignore the old foundations, and strike out some new idea of a building in shape and proportions and style more adapted, as we might suppose, to the taste and requirements of the nineteenth century. We laboriously track out all least vestiges of the original builder's great design, and note each fragment which can tell its story of the grandeur and dignity and unity which we are sure once characterized the whole. And this, not from any slavish admiration of antiquity simply because it is old, thankful though we are to link ourselves on with the past in the bonds of eloquent associations and grateful memories; but because we believe that the plan we are studying was planned by a master-mind, and that, even as all departures from, and all neglect of, that plan in times gone by have invariably marred and disguised its beauty and its excellence, so will it be again. Our only safety lies in entering thoroughly into the great architect's own design, and in endeavouring faithfully to embody this in all the work we do. It is the same with the spiritual building. Surely there too was the great Architect with His great design. “God created man in His own image.” That image has been marred and shattered and all but

effaced by man's sin. Yet traces there are of the primæval plan still; fragments which may tell how beautiful and glorious the "perfect man" must be; features discernible amid all the displacements and accretions and confusions through which we dimly trace their form, speaking of the greatness of man's destiny, and, alas! no less of the greatness of his fall. And our work is a work of restoration. Thank God, we are not left to put together the plan from such disjointed and disfigured fragments as we may find or think we find. The Almighty Architect has set His plan before us that we may not err. He has shown us the pattern to which we are to work in our restoration. Do we ask for lines and measurements to guide us? Behold "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." As we fit our building more and more to that, we are bringing out more and more the great design, and surely once more fashioning man—nay, let me rather say suffering Him, who once created him, now again to re-fashion him—"in the image of God." And is it otherwise with the Church as a whole—the spiritual temple in which we are built up as living stones, in which (as another Apostle writes) we are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"? I think not. For, though indeed we have no such embodiment of the perfect state of the Church as we have of the individual man, yet surely there was here too the grand and beautiful plan laid out, and partly wrought out; and if, through man's perversity and blindness, the whole design was never yet brought to completion, yet the lines were traced and the foundations laid, and enough of the great purpose executed to show what might be, and what the Master-builder willed to be; so that, as in many cases it is left for after-ages to complete some part of a

Cathedral Church which was left unfinished by the builders of old, we have only to work on the old lines, and to strengthen the old foundations, and to build on upon the plan begun, to bring the building nearer and nearer to the mind of God. And so in truth all our work for the Church of Christ,—all our endeavours to heal its breaches, to widen its borders, to strengthen its virtues, to correct its errors, to perfect its graces, to utilize its powers, to multiply its energies,—all are a work of restoration; not indeed to a state which ever has been realized upon earth, but of restoration to the plan of the Divine Founder, mutilated and obstructed and perverted as that plan has been by the sins and follies of man.

All this restoration is hard work, slow work, costly work. We do not expect a vast building like this to be completed in a day or in a year. Nay, we are content to believe that we may never live to see it quite complete—all done that could be done to make it beautiful and worthy of its holy uses. Yet we labour on. And so with our spiritual work. This must be gradual, laborious, and at best very imperfect. Yet we labour on. Yes; for it is very blessed work. It is very blessed to be fellow-workers with God in this restoration of the ruined plan. Think how well the upgrowth of the visible building under the craftsmen's skill pictures to you the progress of the mystic architecture. The Christian must grow up into Christ in all things. He is not made at once that which he is to be. First, the foundation is laid. He comes to Christ. "*To whom coming,*" writes St. Peter, "ye also, as lively stones, are built up." *There* is, and ever must be, the foundation. Whether of the Church at large, or of each separate Christian, it is the same. "Other founda-

tion can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ." It is true that Christ is also the Head-stone of the corner, the crowning and final glory of the perfected building. It is true that in coming to the perfect man the Apostle speaks also of our coming in the unity of the faith, and of the full or perfect knowledge (as the original word implies) of the Son of God. Yes; for Christ is indeed the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last, the Author and the Finisher, the Foundation and the Corner-stone. The work must be "begun and ended" in Him. There is, throughout its course, much new knowledge of Him to be gained, much new faith in Him to be won, much new likeness to Him to be wrought out: but the very first stone of the very lowest foundation must be laid in Him, else it is laid on a quicksand, and whatever superstructure we build upon it will sink and crack and fall. But, the true foundation once laid, firm and sure and solid, then, stone by stone, course by course, slowly yet securely, rises the after-fabric. Grace after grace is built up on Christ. The scattered stones of the ruin are lifted each into its own place in its own order. Behold the manner of the building. "Giving all diligence," writes St. Peter, "add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Perhaps it may not be too fanciful to think of *faith* as like the windows letting in the blessed light of heaven; of *virtue* as like the walls giving strength and firmness to the whole (for "virtue" in this place seems to mean rather 'manly courage' than simply 'holiness of living,' which indeed comes afterwards); of *knowledge* as like the pillars which

prop and hold up the superstructure; of *temperance* and *patience* as like the floor, which lies low but is not the less serviceable; of *godliness* as like the arches which point to heaven; of *brotherly kindness and charity* as like the cement which binds stone to stone in blessed unity. And many other gifts and graces there are, each to be sought and won in turn, each to be built into its place and added to its fellows, till "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." And mark, my brethren, how the finer and more delicate graces ever come last, just as the elaborate carved work and the marble and polished stones of the visible fabric are added when the more substantial portions are completed. Those fair flowers which, defying the unbending texture of the stone, crown so gracefully the slender shafts and wreath the airy capitals in some exquisitely finished building are but meet emblems of the fairer flowers of peace and love and joy and thankfulness and unselfishness and heavenliness and devotion, which crown and perfect at length the Christian's growth in grace.

There is another point in which the building or the restoration of a beautiful church may well teach us a lesson concerning the spiritual work which it so marvellously typifies. Think how much depends on the due proportion of part to part, the due harmony of feature with feature, in producing the glorious impression of grandeur and of unity which was the final aim of the architect's prescient skill. It is not the perfection of each individual portion which will produce this effect. A grand old Norman doorway, richly carved with quaintest mouldings, deep, massive, manifold; a beautiful clustered column, light and graceful as some tall forest tree; a window of

stately simplicity, its well-adjusted lights severely cut through the face of solid stone ; another window charming the eye with its exquisitely devised tracery, its manifold bending lines mapped out as it were on the plain of light ; each of these may be a work of exceeding beauty in itself, but the combination of these will produce no charm, but a sense of discord and incongruity. So too in regard to dimensions. Let each part of a Cathedral be in itself good and true in both style and proportions, yet how little will the separate beauty avail, if wide and lofty aisles be affixed to a low and narrow nave, or a nave of noble dignity terminate in a choir and chancel suited only to a nave of half the size. Now this matter of proportion and harmony is of the very utmost moment in the spiritual building. Whether in the formation of the individual character, or in the edifying—the building up—of the body of Christ, the “proportion of faith,” the due counterbalancing of different truths and different sides of truth, the due relation to one another of different graces and virtues, is as essential as the separate care for the excellence of each. The absence of this due proportion produces in the individual, as in the Church, narrowness, one-sidedness, inconsistency, error. Most error, as is often said, is but one-sided truth—truth exaggerated until it dwarfs or obscures other counterbalancing truth. And most of the infirmities and inconsistencies of good men are in like manner one-sided virtues—virtues exaggerated and intensified until they monopolize the region in which other virtues should find their sphere of action. Of course I am speaking inaccurately when I speak of virtues thus exaggerated into vices. For plainly a virtue ceases to be such when it passes the limit of its rightful and healthy

exercise, and in strict truth there can be no such thing as a virtue in excess. But I shall not be misunderstood. We can all see that practically that which is good in itself, and has a good use, and good ends, may be rendered worse than useless by some great disproportion between it and other virtues. Let us take an example or two. First in regard to belief. One teacher presses the doctrine of conversion into such prominence, and makes it to occupy so large a space in his system, that it practically obscures and overshadows the Divine authority and the life-giving power of the Sacraments. Another preaches sacramental grace to the dwarfing and practical negation of the necessity for a thorough change of heart and life in one who has lived in sin. The one, as it were, builds a splendid western entrance, and heaps up all his means of effect and grandeur there, while his chancel is poor and unworthy. The other, expending all his means and attention to secure the magnificence of his chancel, reduces the other parts of his building to an insignificance which equally destroys the unity of the whole. In morals it is the same. Compassion is one of the purest and most beautiful of Christian graces. But it is obvious that, should there be no sense of justice to counterbalance it, it would degenerate into a feeble good-nature at best, and, however beautiful a thing in itself, would have no beauty when becoming the one noticeable feature in an ill-balanced and one-sided character. It is often the case that a virtue possessed in a weaker measure in some well-adjusted character is more blest to the possessor, more beneficial to others, and more beautiful to contemplate, than the same virtue existing with far greater force and energy in a character lacking such other virtues as should temper and regulate it, and

secure its being neither excessive nor defective, but a duly proportioned feature in a fair and harmonious whole. A smaller building which is well-proportioned is more beautiful and effective than a larger which is ill-proportioned. May God help us all to build up our own spiritual building, whether of faith or of practice, so that there may be nothing one-sided, nothing exaggerated, nothing defective, but that, accepting God's truth in all its fulness and manifoldness, and working out the lost image of God in all its harmony and completeness, we may at least approach towards the "perfect man"—"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

With two more thoughts I will conclude. First, let me express my deep and earnest conviction that in the system and teaching of our beloved Church of England will be found the best helps towards that growth into the completeness of restored humanity, which has been my subject to-day. I am far from saying that other bodies of Christians, and other systems, have not their own excellences. With regard to those bodies which have separated from us, it is plain that the desire to develop into larger proportions some view or some practice, probably of primary importance, has been at least one of the causes of their existence. Certainly the errors of such bodies are for the most part not false statements, but true statements wanting the counterbalancing correction of other no less true statements. It may be, too, that greater zeal and energy are stimulated in a small sect by the very necessities of its existence. But I fearlessly maintain that in the broad comprehensive loving system of the Church of England is to be found a far more harmonious, a far more duly adjusted, a far better proportioned, setting forth of the

truth of God than in any other system in this imperfect world. I can never cease to admire the wisdom and beauty of our Prayer-book; the absence of all forcing of special views of controverted truth so as to stamp a party character upon it; the avoidance of technical expressions belonging rather to man's systematizing of the truth than to the truth itself; the calm and Bible-like simplicity of its thoughts and language. The man trained in the system of the Church of England will be not narrow in views, but broad and loving; not the slave of a watchword, but a disciple of the Catholic faith; not one-sided, but many-sided; not a party man, but a simple and honest member of the Church of Christ. And as in faith, so in holiness of living. It is common enough to be told we must go to the Church of Rome, with all its errors, for examples of the truly devout life. God forbid I should seek to decry the wonderful purity and devotion and heavenly-mindedness which have been shown forth in not a few members of that Church. Their devotional writings, such as those of Scupoli, St. Francis de Sales, Thomas à Kempis, and others, are most helpful to those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." But, while this is most true, yet I hold that there is an unpretending manliness and honesty, an absence of self-assertion and of morbid self-scrutiny, a trustworthiness and straightforwardness, about the character of the true English Churchman which are at least less marked features in the religious life developed in other communions. So that, in an active busy age like this, and in a land where the more practical side of religion is of daily necessity, I believe the simple devout earnest English Churchman displays the nearest approach attainable by us to the com-

pleteness of Christian manhood. And then the other thought. Surely it is true that the beauty, the order, the quiet and regular influence, of the Daily Cathedral Service is an element in the perfecting of Christian manhood, in those (alas! necessarily few, but surely fewer than is necessary,) who are able to take part in them. I know this is but one part of the use and value of our noble Cathedral establishments. As homes of learning and piety, as centres of religious life to the diocese, as schools of Church music, they are most precious. And there are other ways in which they may be connected with good and holy works. But my thoughts to-day have clustered around the actual building in which we have met, and there they shall rest. I will hope and pray that many souls may in this glorious Church be helped onward in some little measure in their growth in grace; that (not untouched by the spirit-stirring influences of beautiful music, and the sense of awe and majesty inspired by noble architecture, yet much more filled with the consciousness of the presence of Him who dwelleth not in temples made with hands, yet is surely present, to hear, to bless, to do, wheresoever His people meet to pray,) they may be drawn within the veil, and lifted heavenward, and strengthened in faith and hope and charity, and conformed more and more to the mind of Christ, and restored more and more to the image of God, and rendered more and more fit for that new life, in which alone we hope to come, in all its fulness, to the "perfect man," in which alone we hope to attain, in all its completeness, "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," since it is there that we believe "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

THE CORPORATE LIFE OF THE
CHURCH.

THE CORPORATE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

Preached during the Octave of the Consecration of Portsea Church, 1889.

“In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”—EPIH. ii. 21, 22.

THERE are few passages into which greater light and meaning are introduced by the Revised Version than this. You will find that in that version the former of the two verses I have read to you is translated thus: “In whom *each several* building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.” I have no doubt this gives the Apostle’s meaning more exactly, and, if so, you will notice that the two verses present to us the two great aspects in which all religion must be regarded—the one the *individual*, the other the *corporate*, life of Christians; the one the building up of each single separate soul as a dwelling-place of God, the other the building up of the whole company of the faithful as a dwelling-place of God. In Christ “*each several building*” thus grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Christ “ye also are *builded together* for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Now I am going to speak to you this evening of the

latter of these two verses, believing that the Consecration of this magnificent Church is an occasion which most naturally suggests to us thoughts of our common faith, our common worship, our common life in Christ. But I dare not pass by without at least some few words of earnest enforcement the momentous truth set forth in the earlier of the two verses. When our blessed Lord spoke of the Holy Spirit, "which dwelleth with you, and *shall be in you,*" it would seem that He spoke of a personal individual indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. When St. Paul appealed to the Corinthians as to the sacredness of the body, saying, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?" there can be no doubt that he too was thinking of such a separate personal indwelling of the Spirit of God in man. And in very truth this is the foundation of all religion. Till man has *personal* relations with God, it is hard to conceive of his having any *corporate* relations. It would be a monstrous unreality to conceive of a society which God could make His abode, in no single member of which society was the presence of the Spirit of God. A whole cannot be utterly diverse from its parts. The presence of the Spirit of God and of the life of God in the soul of man must be presupposed before we can even approach the subject of the corporate life of the Church, or, in other words, of the building up of the Christian Society as a habitation of God through the Spirit. I have no doubt there was at one time a great danger of over-individualism among religious people in this land. It was not an uncommon thing to hear people say, 'A man's religion lies between himself and his God.' Why, half the Bible is straight against that! Possibly there may be some little danger the other way now.

Happily there has grown up amongst us in these latter days a far truer appreciation of the meaning and nature of the Church. I think Church-people at any rate no longer regard the Christian community as a multitude of separate isolated beings, each with his private relation to God, but held and compacted together by no very definite or tangible bond of unity. But may it not be that, in some at least, the very appreciation of this bond of unity, the very recognition of the truth and grandeur of the corporate life of Christendom, may over-dwarf the individual aspect of religion, so that there may be an acceptance of Church-membership without an acceptance of deep personal religion, much thought and much talk of the *building together*, coupled with some little forgetfulness of "*each several building*"? Forgive me for this warning, but I think I have known some enthusiastic Churchmen who have been very poor Christians.

I turn now to my more direct subject. Certainly, as we read our Bible, again and again we meet with words which can only point to the corporate indwelling of the Spirit of God in the Church. What is this that St. Paul says, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people"? Mark, "ye" (plural) are "the temple" (singular); not 'temples,' but "the temple." But I think words could hardly be clearer than those of my text, "Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." And this is paralleled by St. Peter's words, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual temple." Indeed, as I said, half the Bible is against the idea that a man's religion lies only between himself and his God. If one thing is absolutely

plain in God's Word, it is that Christianity is not an individual matter only, but also a corporate matter. Image after image, familiar to us all, sets forth this truth. The Temple with its spiritual stones, and its indwelling presence of God, Jesus Christ being the chief Corner-stone, is but one such image. There is the Vine and its branches, of which Jesus Christ is the Root and Stem; there is the Sheepfold and the sheep, of which He is the Good Shepherd; there is the Body and its members, of which He is the Head; there is the Household and the servants, of which He is the Master; there is the Kingdom and its subjects, of which He is the King. If one half of the Bible concerns man in his relation to God, certainly the other half concerns man in his relation to his brother man. Consider; When Christ and His Apostles first went forth preaching, what was it they preached? The Gospel, you say. Yes, certainly, the Gospel. But in what way? What form did the good news take when first proclaimed? They preached "the Gospel of the kingdom," "the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Yes, the Gospel of the Kingdom came before the Gospel of the King. You will not mistake me. No one could gather that, because it was first announced, therefore it was more important. But the time was not yet come for the fuller Gospel which was to be revealed. Nevertheless it was a Gospel they proclaimed. It was good news that One had come to set up a new kingdom among men. But the Kingdom and the Church are the same. Therefore Christ and His Apostles went about preaching the Church.

But stay; is it true that the Kingdom and the Church are the same? I dare say it does not at once seem certainly so to all my hearers. But we must not forget

that nothing can be clearer than that the kingdom proclaimed was a *present* kingdom, a kingdom *here on earth*; a "kingdom of God" indeed, for God was its source and end; a "kingdom of heaven" indeed, for it was heavenly in its principles and aims; and yet assuredly a kingdom full of human imperfections and infirmities. It is like a field in which tares are mingled with the wheat; it is like a net which gathers of all sorts good and bad; it grows like the mustard tree from a little beginning; it works like leaven in the world;—all this proves that it is a kingdom here on earth. Then again Jesus said to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is within you," *i.e.* in the midst of you (for the kingdom had no place in their hearts); and St. Paul says to Christians, "God *hath* translated you into the kingdom of His dear Son." If, then, the Church is simply that Society which Christ and His Apostles founded on earth, I am right in saying they preached the Church. If the Church is not that Kingdom which Christ preached and set up among men, I do not know what she is. Yes; the Gospel of the Kingdom is no less true than the Gospel of the King.

Now does any one think there is a danger in speaking thus lest we exalt the Church overmuch, or lest we perchance even put the Church in the place of Christ, as though we were saved by the Church instead of saved by Christ? God help us, if any such foolish and miserable idea could enter our heads! Saved *in* the Church—yes. But saved *by* the Church! Why, "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but only the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Church is saved by Christ, not by itself. The Church means only the great Society of poor sinful

struggling believing people. How can that save anybody? O Christian people, let nothing, no Church, no system, no ordinance, no creed, no person, ever get between you and Christ, so as to hide Christ from you, or stand to you in the place of Christ. The Church, and Sacraments, and Ministers, all these are just to bring you to Christ and Christ to you. Count it as a privilege worth worlds that you may go boldly to Christ for pardon and grace and salvation, and that you have a free access to the Father through Him, and bless all those means of grace and God-given helps which set you in the Divine presence. Or, again, does any one think there may be a danger of setting the Church above Christ, as though it were greater than He? Again God forgive us, if we could give ground for any such notion! What! the Church greater than Christ! The Church is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." But is not the Head greater than the body? Must not He that filleth be greater than that which is filled? Then away with such fears. If we only once understand what the Church is, I do not think they need trouble us much.

What we affirm as absolutely clear is that Christ and His Apostles founded a Society in the world, which was at the very first proclaimed as a Kingdom, but very soon, as the Bible itself witnesses, became known as the Church.

And now to proceed to some farther thoughts about the Church. This Society, founded by Christ and His Apostles, must, like every other society, have its constitution, its government, its rules, its principles. It could not hold together at all without these. Every society, from a mighty Kingdom to a Village Benefit Club, has these. What then, I would ask, distinguishes this Society of which we are speaking from all others? What marks it off from

them, and gives it its own special character? It is "*an habitation of God through the Spirit.*" This is what no other society is, or can be. The Church possesses Divine gifts and powers, because it is the abode of a Divine presence. It is a spiritual Society. The world looks on the Church, and sees only a great organization, with much that is imperfect, much perverted, much incomplete. The Divine origin of the Church, the Divine presence with the Church, have never saved it, were never pledged to save it, from the consequences of human wilfulness or error. The world knows nothing of the indwelling Spirit which gives to the Church its essential character. How could it? For we are speaking of that "Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him"—(Is *that* true? *Do ye know Him, brethren?*)—"for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Yes; the very meaning and purpose of the existence of the Church is that it is the area, the clothing, the environment, the casket, of the supernatural. If it be not this, it is nothing; it is a mere human society, graceless, giftless, powerless. If *is* this, it is verily "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." The world minimizes the supernatural. The world hates the supernatural. It will admit as little as it may. See how it treats the work of Christ for the salvation of man. It will, if it accepts Christianity at all, allow the *past* work of Christ. That took place long ago. There is a certain distance of thought, as well as of time, in discussing, and even in accepting, the great doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement. There is a halo of antiquity, a dim reverence of the far faint past, surrounding these acts of near two thousand years ago. But for the *present* work

of Christ the world has little tolerance. To Christ's presence in His Church through the Holy Spirit the world resolutely closes its eyes. It would be too close, too real, too pressing, to be welcome. It would be a truth not to be speculated upon, not to be held as a time-honoured doctrine, nor to be revered as a traditional mystery of a bygone age, but to be acted upon, to enter into life's texture, to become a present power and element in the soul's inner being. And yet, as surely as Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, and ascended into heaven, so surely is that same Jesus Christ, in the power of His glorified Humanity, present in His Church by the Holy Spirit. He that said, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth," said also, and in the same breath, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." And again, almost immediately, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is not doctrine. It is fact. The Lord Jesus Christ is exalted to His throne of glory. We live under His mediatorial reign. But, when He ascended up on high, He received gifts for men, and the greatest of these gifts was "that the Lord God might dwell among them." And this is the meaning of the foretellings of the promised Comforter. This is the meaning of the Pentecostal marvel. The King is in His kingdom, reigning, pitying, blessing. And the power of His kingdom is the Spirit of God. The Church is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And He filleth His body with the life of the

Spirit of God. It is "an habitation of God through the Spirit."

I am anxious at this point to guard against a possible danger. We speak, because the written Word speaks, because the living Word speaks, of the Church as the abode, and sphere of action, of the Spirit of God. It is true. Yet we dare not set limits to God, or speak as though He had elected to set such limits to Himself. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and he would be a rash and wilful man who should venture to deny the presence and power of the Spirit of God in many a soul, and in many a movement, which may seem to us outside the recognized bounds of the sphere of His ordinary action. Even what those recognized bounds are is a question of profound moment, and one upon which one trembles to lightly lay down the law. But that there is a large and generous freedom in the work of the Holy Spirit in the world we are learning, I think, more and more freely, and more and more thankfully, to allow. For us Church-people the question is a simpler and more practical one. We have no doubt, not a shadow of a doubt, that in our branch of the great universal Church of Christ we have every element which can assure us of its being a true and pure representative of the great Society founded by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. We are not ashamed to profess our belief that we have more in our own branch of the Church to support and strengthen such assurance than we could find in any other branch. We hold that we have inherited by the mercy of God a faith scriptural and primitive in its purity and simplicity, catholic and unsullied in its presentation of this faith to mankind. We hold that in our Ministry and Sacraments we have, and hold fast, that which has been held always, in all places,

and by all the Church of God. I would rather we should weigh our responsibilities than boast of our privileges. I have set myself to speak to you of the corporate life of the Church, which is nothing else but the presence of the Spirit of God in the Church. I would that we should realize more and more fully and vividly this great truth, and the practical issues which flow from it. I would that we should recognize more and more distinctly how all that the Church is to us, and all that the Church does for us, rests upon the great truth I am trying to impress on you to day—the truth, namely, that the corporate life and power of the Church are nothing else but the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. I repeat this to give it emphasis. Let me show you what I mean, as regards the practical bearing of this truth upon ourselves, by some examples. We gather in the little ones into the fold of Christ by His own divinely ordained Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Why? Because “*by one Spirit* are we all baptized into one body,” and “except a man be born of water and *of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” We teach the little ones, as soon as they are able to speak the words, to kneel down, and put their little hands together, and say, “Our Father.” Why? Because the Spirit which we have received is not the spirit of bondage, making us afraid of God, but “*the Spirit of adoption*, whereby we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” As our children grow older, and are beginning to face the trials and temptations of life, we prepare them with careful pains for the solemn laying-on-of-hands by the Bishop. Why? Because the Bible tells us that those who partook of this holy rite in Apostolic times “*received the Holy Ghost*.” We lead them on to a yet more deeply blessed and solemn rite. We bid them kneel at the altar-rail, and there receive

the heavenly food of the Body and Blood of their crucified and risen Lord. Why? "It is *the Spirit* that quickeneth : the flesh profiteth nothing"; and it has been the unbroken teaching of the Church from the beginning, borne special witness to in the most ancient liturgies, that it is the Holy Spirit of God, called down upon the earthly elements, which gives to them their unearthly sanctity and blessedness. We gather our faithful ones for Morning and Evening Prayer, and (thanks to our Reformers for restoring to us our primitive and most touching opening act of worship) we begin by the humble confession of our sins before God. Why? The first work of the *Holy Ghost the Comforter*, says our Lord, is to convict the world of sin. We join in the simple reverent beautiful prayers of our Church, seeking from our heavenly Father all things requisite and necessary for our souls and bodies. Why? Because "*the Spirit* helpeth our infirmities," and teaches us how to pray. We read from the lectern (and I would that this reading were always made as instructive and impressive an act as possible) the Lessons from the Old and New Testaments. Why? Because "holy men of old spake as they were moved *by the Holy Ghost.*" We gather up the blessed teaching of God's Word, presenting its choicest truths as a string of precious jewels, as we recite the ancient Creeds of the Church. Why? Because our Master promised His disciples that the *Holy Ghost, the "Spirit of truth,"* should lead them into all the truth, and bring all things to their remembrance that He had taught, and in these Creeds we have the truth thus imparted to the first founders of the Church enshrined for us, and committed to us as a sacred charge to be guarded and handed down to our children and our children's children. We ourselves, your Clergy, stand

before you, and say without fear, as an infinitely greater one said of old, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Why? Because in that most solemn moment of our lives, when, kneeling before the Chief Pastor of the flock, we were set apart for the fuller ministry of our high and holy calling, there were spoken over us the words of power, "Receive *the Holy Ghost* for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God."

See, then, how all is full of this one deep, and yet most blessed, mystery—the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God. See how every act and function of our religious life wins from this truth its blessedness and its efficacy. See how the teaching of my text interpenetrates, and intertwines with, the whole of our Church's life and system. See how "ye also," ye Christian people, called into the kingdom, baptized into the body of Christ, sharers in the Divine life of communion with your ascended Lord,—see how "ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." Yes; how often do these words pass our lips! How seldom do they find the fulness of their meaning in our hearts and lives! For in what is it that we profess our faith? It is in a Divine Person, in a presence and a life, in the indwelling presence and life of God, purchased for us by the sacrifice and merits of Jesus Christ, sanctifying, strengthening, guiding, both the separate individual soul of the child of God in his struggle to work towards "the perfect man," the goal and end of his being, and the whole Church of God in its world-wide issues and destinies, in its corporate life, and common acts and energies. It is this Divine Person, the promised

and abiding Comforter, who is in the place of Christ as the strength and life of His own ; who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us ; who in us and in the Church of God ever exalts and glorifies the name of Jesus ; “in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE
AND THE HEART.

THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE AND THE HEART.

Preached in St. Paul's, 1873.

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”—1 SAM. xvi. 7.

SUPPOSING that for one whole day we were all of us enabled by miraculous power, and compelled as well as enabled, to look (as God looks) not on the outward appearance but on the heart of every one we saw, what a dreadful—what an intolerably dreadful—day that would be! How it would startle one with all manner of horrible discoveries! How it would confound all one's old judgments and opinions! I don't want to make out my fellow-Christians worse than they really are. I have no doubt whatever that, in such a case as I have supposed, one's soul would be thrilled to behold the unsuspected heroism of many a hidden but desperate struggle with temptation; one's heart would be melted at the sight of many an invisible cross humbly and patiently borne; one's admiration would be aroused by many a life of simple purity and holiness where the outside appearance was commonplace and uninteresting enough. These would be the partial compensations. But if there would be at least some happy surprises, some revelations of hidden worth, alas! I fear it is no libel upon the world

around us to believe that the opposite cases would be far more in number. 'What!' we should too probably exclaim again and again, 'can this cold dead prayerless loveless heart belong to him who has been such a pattern of outward propriety, so constant in his attendance upon the means of grace, so seemingly devout and earnest? Can this soul all stained and befouled with the defilements of secret lusts and impurity be his against whom none ever dared to breathe a breath of slander, so high did he stand above suspicion of shame? Can this shallow frivolous worldly scheming creature be she whom we took to be so simply kind and amiable and unselfish? Can this soul so full of proud resentful unforgiving thoughts, hugging so fondly the memories of misunderstandings, aggravating them so wantonly by imagined scenes of bitterness, can this be his soul who at worst folded himself in a chill reserve to the eye of man, and was ever respected and esteemed for his honourable bearing? Can he—the scrupulously exact, the patiently laborious, the notoriously trustworthy, man of business—can he own this heart which is like nought but a miser's chest in which is heard no sound save the chinking of gold?' These are miserable revelations even to imagine. I need scarcely pursue them farther. But are we looking all this strange sad day which I have pictured upon other hearts, and are no eyes reading ours? If it would be all but intolerable to be compelled thus to scrutinize with God-like omniscience the inmost hearts of others, would it be so easy to bear the piercing scrutiny of all other eyes upon our own? What if every one we met for a whole day were to read with perfect clearness every secret of our most secret souls? I think some—shall I say many? ought I to say most?—of us would enter into our closet and shut-to the

door, and, whether or no we remembered Him who "seeth in secret," would, at least for that day, welcome utter solitude, and flee with dread from the presence of our brother man. How many husbands and wives, how many brothers and sisters, how many parents and children, would fearlessly and happily meet each other that day, and smile with the security of having nothing to conceal from the novel visitant to the secret chambers of which each had hitherto kept the key?

So far I am supposing the eye miraculously opened to discern the actual present state and feelings of the hearts of others. I will now go on a step farther. Supposing the power given to embrace, not alone a clear insight into the present *positive* state of the heart, but also a perfect apprehension of its *relative* state and worth, so that there should lie open to the gaze (even as there lies ever open to the one all-seeing Eye) every least element and circumstance which has conduced towards that state and character which we are contemplating, every natural tendency and bias of disposition, every influence of training and education, every pressure of external force, every negative disadvantage, every weakness or warp of the reasoning faculty, every incident of the previous life which could leave its mark however faint upon the man,—and all these gauged and weighed and balanced and adjusted so as to produce an absolutely just judgment of each person as compared with all others,—and now, if there be fewer shocks of startled dismay than in the former case, yet how utterly would all our old accustomed ways of regarding others be confused and overturned, how strangely different from all expectation, how marvellously unlike anything which our past experience might help us to guess at, would be the order of either

merit or guilt in which we should classify our fellow-creatures ! Truly we should then at least understand the utter truth of our Lord's assertion, " Many that are last shall be first, and the first last."

Think, for example, of those poor wretches—I suppose the proper epithet for them is 'degraded'—of whom one may read day by day in the police news of our press. We recoil perchance from the tale of coarse brutal unattractive crime. If we are kind-hearted, we bestow a moment's pity upon the poor ignorant misguided criminal. But to compare ourselves—our moral respectable irreproachable selves—with a low repulsive criminal, oh ! this is absurd. We know we have plenty of faults and are "miserable sinners" of course (though, by the way, when any one presses home to us some one particular fault, or suggests our being guilty of some one particular miserable sin, we are straightway angry and indignant) ; but we are so far removed in every way from the 'degraded' creature we read about, that, if any thought at all of our relative position comes into our minds, it is not so very unlike a thought that was spoken once of old, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." I don't mean that that is altogether a bad form of thanksgiving, if it be not spoilt by silly pride. But there really seems to most people no point of contact between themselves and some wretched criminal, no common ground where they can stand to make a comparison. They are moving in a different sphere, and to imagine themselves in his place is too wild a thought to be entertained. And yet bring me face to face with even a murderer, if you will, and I have no idea, and no means of forming an idea, which of the two has in reality the more merit or the more guilt in the sight of God. You remember the story of John Bradford,

who, seeing a criminal going to execution, cried, 'There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God.' Yes; I cannot judge between us. If I had that miraculous power I have been supposing, I could; but I haven't. I can only look on the outward appearance, and that tells me literally nothing of the relative condition of our hearts. Here am I, on the one side, severed by every influence and association and circumstance of life from temptation to crime, blest with everything that should make me happy and contented, with tastes and education and disposition to which gross forms of crime are repulsive, with a position and calling which would make gross crime simply social suicide, so that I am absolutely without the temptation to it, and have therefore never resisted temptation to it. And dare I take credit to myself for a respectability of outward conduct which, so far as I can judge, is the necessary result of things quite apart from my own will? Dare I look with self-complacency on an immunity from the crimes which God in His mercy has made it all but impossible for me to commit? While there, on the other hand, is one, reared perhaps in the midst of brutal violence, familiar from a child with all forms of sin, brought up to fear neither God nor man, never taught to resist one temptation, and never restrained in the indulgence of his evil passions by the tone or influence of those around him—and he has committed a great crime. Well, he must be punished for the good of society; for his own good, perchance, too; but how do I know that that poor wretch has not yielded to a force of temptation such as is to me unknown, or such as would inevitably draw me into sin, if only the sin to which I were tempted were a refined and polite sin instead of a gross and vulgar one?

Take another case. A thief is charged before the magistrates. He has deliberately stolen something—money, or food, or clothing. He too must be punished. We, who can look only on the outward appearance, can, of course, only take cognizance of the outward actions, and at most can penetrate a very little way into motives, and comparative guilt. But you, my brethren, who have enough and to spare, who can indulge your cultured tastes and gratify your graceful fancies without stint, you who do not know what it is to covet food or clothing, to whom the thing that poor thief has taken is of no appreciable value, you who can live on the best, and dress as you please, and find money for all your little indulgences, what do *you* know of that man's temptations? You have never probably in your life withstood a fierce assault of temptation to steal. Do you know how many times *he* has done so? You are fenced off by the ordering of God's good providence from the very approach of a temptation which to *him* perchance has been an ever-present peril. Will you dare to hug yourself in a wretched self-complacency, and as you look on the poor thief to say, 'At least I am honest; I have never broken the eighth commandment'? Well, I hope not. But is that so sure? Have you ever heard of such a thing in polite society as running into debt, living beyond your means, ordering costly luxuries which you knew you could never pay for? Have you ever heard of fraudulent bankruptcies, or reckless speculation? Have you ever heard of kind-hearted friends or relatives robbed and ruined by the dishonesty of those for whom they have given security? Have you ever heard of money borrowed and never repaid? Have you ever heard of tradesmen selling a bad article for a good one, and imposing on the ignorance of a

purchaser? Have you ever heard of the proverbial cheating, which is almost condoned, in horse-dealing? One more question. It shall be in sacred words. "Will a man rob God?" It may be some of you have heard of this sort of stealing—of giving to God in alms a miserable pittance while there is lavish expenditure on self, of giving on no fixed principle, so that a wretchedly small proportion of income is dedicated to holy uses, and the Pharisee of old, who gave tithes of all that he possessed (a *double* tithe, remember, one for the ministry and one for the poor, a fifth of his income in all), may well rise up in judgment against those who profess to live by the great broad free Christian law of love. What is the real difference as regards moral guilt between these things and the thefts of the detected criminal? True, he steals simply and undisguisedly, with no evasions and circumlocutions; and these others—well, at least they escape the meshes of the law, and society is lenient towards them on the whole. But as to the comparative guilt, that is wholly beyond the ken of one who can look only "on the outward appearance."

Many crimes, as we all know, spring from drunkenness. Drunkenness is very often the poor man's only notion of enjoying himself. Would that it were otherwise! But to the man of refinement there is most frequently no temptation to drunkenness. It is coarse, revolting, lowering. Yet there may be the most complete indulgence of the appetite consistently with the utmost refinement and good taste. And for my part I am quite unable to judge of the comparative guiltiness of the poor labourer who in his coarse way, having no finer tastes, drinks ale to excess, and of the rich epicure who is fastidiously particular as to his meats and drinks, and expends much thought, time, money, and perchance

temper, upon the flavours of his dishes and the vintages of his wines. The one falls into crime, and becomes amenable to the police, and is brought before the magistrates or the court of assize. The other is probably courted and admired, and at least he escapes all such painful consequences. But as regards the self-indulgence which is at the root of the matter, only He can judge truly who looketh on the heart.

One more case I am going to suppose. It is, alas! a sadly common one. A poor young girl is accused of child-murder. She has been led into sin by one probably far guiltier than herself, and in her misery she has tried to conceal her shame. O ye pure wives and daughters, who can front the world with level eye, and can scarce understand that dreadful cowering horror and dread of disgrace, who, if ye knew, would perhaps walk with a somewhat statelier tread and a somewhat sterner mien past some such crouching form in your streets, I cannot, I must not, pass by the thoughts which this, the great misery which has blasted many a young life, has for you. Oh, bear with me: for the sake of that tenderest of all tender hearts, which, seeing as God seeth, knowing what was in man, once said, "Neither do I condemn thee"; bear with me. It is not to sully your fair fame that I dare to link my words to you with such a case as this which we are now regarding. But I have this to say. It may be—yes, surely it may be—that the vanity which bestows so much thought on personal appearance, which perhaps delights so much to attract, the love of dress which is perhaps as absorbing and extravagant a passion in these days as it ever was among us, the pleasure-seeking which is so incessant with many, and which makes many so frivolous and worldly,—it may be, I say, that all this

holds in it quite as deep and real a germ of evil, when the circumstances and temptations of each are faithfully measured, as the course of frailty which has led that poor outcast to her deed of sin. You who love admiration and pleasure so dearly, can you tell what you might have been with her temptations and surroundings? And can you tell what she might have been with your safeguards and education?

Why have I thus drawn your thoughts, my brethren, to speculations upon the comparative merit or guilt of those who to the outward appearance are so unlike? It is that we may all learn to shatter the idol of self-complacency, and to tear into ribbons the garb of self-righteousness. It is that there may be wrought in us that first work of the Divine Comforter—even the conviction of sin. It is that, if we have been saved from the crimes which have brought misery on others, we may know that this is owing to no merit or excellence of our own, but to the mercy of our heavenly Father. It is that we may trace in our own more subtle and refined sins the same principle of evil which we are ready enough to behold in the rougher and coarser transgressions of another class. It is that we may cherish a great generous Christ-like tenderness for sinners; that we may go to sinners, ourselves sinners—aye, go to the lowest, the worst,—and try, as a brother or sister, to help; that we may not be hurt or surprised or indignant, if we are sometimes met with scorn, repulse, ridicule. “Ye have not yet resisted *unto blood*, striving against sin.” They have not yet spit upon us. They treat the servant at any rate better than the Master. It is, finally, that we may cast ourselves in all humility and self-abnegation at the foot of the Cross, and there confess our own nothingness, there ask mercy for all our sins and unworthiness, there praise God for all the

safeguards with which He has so graciously surrounded us, there seek and find grace and strength to rise to higher things, there learn the full import and blessedness of the words, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Amen.

WITH CHRIST.

WITH CHRIST.

Preached at Windsor, before the Empress Frederick of Germany, shortly after the death of the Emperor, 1888.

“With Me.”—ST. JOHN xvii. 24.

WHEN the Lord prayed, “Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am,” there is nothing to show whether He thought of the presence of those He prayed for with Him on earth in the veilings of His glory, or in the sweet rest and peace of Paradise, or in the final triumph of His perfected kingdom. Possibly He embraced all these senses in the yearnings of His infinite sympathy. It must be always and in every way blessed to be with Jesus.

And first, on earth. I suppose it must have been a strangely beautiful thing to have been with Christ when He was on earth. At least for those who really *knew*, who had grace and insight to discern the veiled majesty of Him who took upon Him the form of a bond-servant, for those who could read the Divine through the Human,—at least for those, to be with Him must have been full of trembling joy. We know what it is to us to be with some one transparently good and pure and kind and true. We may ourselves be very far from any approach to the beautiful

character we look upon. But there is around such a character a sort of atmosphere of holy influence. It seems as if no unholy unworthy thoughts or feelings could live in that atmosphere. It wards off all gross and shameful things as potently as could an Angel with a fiery sword. We have only to imagine this strange spell vivified and intensified a hundredfold to realize what must have been the effluence of light and beauty and purity which flowed around the visible presence of the Incarnate Son of God. But that visible presence is no more. Has it then ceased to be possible to be with Christ on earth? If He prays that His own may be with Him where He is, can that only be within the veil that hides the unseen world from mortal eye? Nay, He speaks again and again of an abiding presence with His own even here—a presence even more blessed than was His visible corporeal presence. He is leaving them in bodily form, yet He says, "I will come unto you." He is withdrawing His visible presence, yet He cries, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He asks, "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" Yet He declares, "He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." And is not this the very essence of Christianity? Is not the sense of the presence with us of a living personal Saviour the one great act of faith which gives meaning and reality to all our religious life and actings? If Christianity is more than a mere memory of the past, or a beautiful dream of the purest imaginings of man's intellect, or a skilfully adjusted scheme of doctrines and precepts; if it is a living power, a religion worth living for and dying for; then in its central essence and reality it is the consciousness of the presence—the

spiritual presence, but therefore the deeper and larger presence—of the ever-blessed Son of God with the soul of man. I suppose that it is with the thought of this realized presence of Christ that the writers of the Epistles so often use the expression, “in Christ.” See how, for example, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, every blessing and privilege is spoken of as “in Christ.” God’s eternal choice, our predestination to the adoption of children, our acceptance, our redemption, the gathering together in one of all things, the inheritance, the sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise, all are *in Christ*, all are bestowed, all are realized, in the sphere of His Divine presence. Yes, even on earth, and even now, His own—those whom the Father has given Him—are with Him, bathed in the light of that pure atmosphere, upheld by His strong arm, drawing from Him healing virtue, comforted by His human sympathy, changed into the same image by the transforming grace of adoring love. Not in vain does the one great Intercessor plead for us even now that we too may be with Him where He is. For His prayer, even when first uttered, was not alone for those who then were His. “Neither pray I for these alone,” He cries, “but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.” And this is large enough to embrace even us in these latter days; while we doubt not also that what He prayed then He prays still, where at the right hand of God “He ever liveth to make intercession” for us. His “with Me” is mighty in its prevailing power even here on earth. And we have witnessed the Divine strength of this “with Me.” Surely every noble life of gracious purity and unselfish love, surely every Christ-like bearing of the cross of suffering, surely every generous career of self-sacrificing labour

and devotion, is but a fresh proof that Christ is present with His own, and that His Spirit still animates and inspires the souls of men. I do not think it is only the courageous witness of the uttered word, such as that which Apostles bore so nobly amidst the threats and taunts of their adversaries, which is valid evidence of the strength and force that flow from Christ, for I am sure that there are many, in all ranks and classes, whose simple Christ-like lives and Christ-like tempers and Christ-like actions are such that men may "take knowledge of them that they have been *with Jesus*." Perhaps half unconsciously (for I do not suppose we always recognize the real source or nature of the power that is working in us), certainly with no vain-glory or self-exaltation (which would be wholly un-Christ-like), these have grown into the likeness of Christ, Christ has been formed in them, and they have borne witness to the world that He is with them. Reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, they have been changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. And thus is Christ's prayer, that those whom the Father has given Him may be with Him where He is, answered even here on earth.

Then, next, the prayer is answered—oh, how wonderfully!—for His own in the sweet rest and peace of Paradise. Is not the one clearly revealed and absolutely sure bliss of the departed, who have loved and followed Christ on earth, to be *with Him* where He is? Our Lord's own words to the penitent thief on the cross are conclusive, "To-day thou shalt be *with Me* in Paradise." Oh, how we yearn to know more of those "spirits of just men made perfect," those dearly loved souls who have passed within the veil, and are waiting in peaceful and blessed expectation for the

consummation of the great day! How we long at times for one moment's glimpse of their calm beautiful being, one flash of light which should reveal to us the nature and circumstances of their spiritual existence! But God has in His wisdom hidden these things from us. It may be, if we knew more, we might be tempted to dwell overmuch on the beauty and blessedness in which they pass their existence, and so to become forgetful of present duties and of the work God would have us do on earth. We have seen the strangely unscriptural errors into which over-curious speculations upon the state of the unseen world have led a large part of Christendom. Therefore we bow to God's will, and dare not penetrate farther than we are guided by His holy Word. But those little words "*with Me,*" what a fountain of light they are, as we muse upon that life within the veil! Those blessed ones, in their new and wonderful home, severed for a while from their bodily dwelling-place, "free among the dead" in the mystery of their spiritual being; those "souls of the righteous" which are "in the hand of God";—we know but little concerning them: and God, I think, would have us dwell more on the blessed reunion of the Coming of the Lord than on their present state, for it is for that great day that we are bidden again and again to watch and wait and prepare—aye, even to be patient in waiting for it. Yet one thing we do know. They are *with Christ*. There is for them some special and most blessed consciousness of their Lord's spiritual presence. The very secret of their joy and felicity is the realized nearness of their Lord. I do not think it is passing beyond the teaching of Holy Scripture to speak of the happiness which must flow from the reunion and mutual recognition of the denizens of the spirit-world. That spirit can recognize and commune with spirit in that

world would naturally flow from many passages in the Bible. Certainly, if the spirits of the departed are in a state of consciousness, as no Christian doubts ; if Christ's Spirit could go among the dead, while His Body lay in the tomb, proclaiming to them the accomplishment of the great work of atonement which He came to do ; if in that place of waiting the spirit of the dead thief was to meet in conscious recognition the Spirit of Jesus ; if the three Apostles could know the spirits of Moses and Elias when they appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration ; we need not for one moment doubt the blissful intercourse and intercommunion of spirit with spirit. But I suppose that even this great happiness is almost lost and absorbed in the still deeper and more entrancing happiness of being *with Jesus*. It is His presence in spirit with His own that forms the blessedness of Paradise.

And so we pass on to the end. And again it is the same. See how the Apostle pictures to the Thessalonians the great day of the Lord. The living, he tells us, will have no advantage, no precedence, over the dead in that day. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be *with the Lord*. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." What is this voice of comfort that is to soothe the mourners so that they "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" ? It is the one great all-embracing all-strengthening thought—" *ever with the Lord*." And this thought surely gathers up within itself all blissful reunions of parted dear ones, all holy and happy intercourse with those "whom we have loved long since,

and lost awhile," all the sweet restorations of holy beautiful human love. Yes; all the exquisite happiness, all the entrancing joy, all the glory and rapture, of the resurrection-life, ministered through a thousand channels of delight, are drawn into one supreme and boundless harmony of bliss in the presence of Jesus. Nay, more; for there is something beyond even the joy of beholding and loving. There is the joy of transformation. It is not alone the vision we long for and look for. *That* will be very glorious and beautiful. But it is the *transforming* vision. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "Reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord," we shall be "changed into the same image." Nor may we forget the great difference between this new and heavenly presence of the Lord, and that which we dwelt upon last. For now we are speaking of the fulness of man's perfected nature, of the risen body, of the final state of the redeemed and glorified. It is of this that the Apostle speaks in that magnificent chapter which the Church reads for the comfort of mourners in their darkest hour or grief. It is of this great change that he writes when, speaking of the mortal frame, he says, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Yes, it is no mere spiritual, and so to us almost unimaginable, sense of nearness, communicated we know not how to the disembodied spirit in the dim mysterious spirit-world; but a true bodily vision and companionship, which we can at least in part understand from our present life and surroundings. In a very literal sense our eyes "shall see the King in His beauty."

I know not how this vision of Jesus—this great and

blessed "with Me" of the Eternal Son—I know not how this harmonizes itself with the larger and yet more awful thought of the vision of God in His supreme majesty and glory. That it does so is most sure. And the sense of the Eternal Fatherhood of God must stand out in calm unequalled radiance as the greater light of heaven. Yet when the Lord sends His messages of warning and of encouragement to His seven Churches in Asia, and when He would hold out the hope of joy and triumph to the faithful soldier of the cross, He says, "They shall walk *with Me* in white; for they are worthy." And again, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit *with Me* in My throne." It is still the "with Me." This is, then, the true life and strength and bliss of the children of God. "Ever with the Lord"! With Him in the life of faith now; with Him in the life of waiting within the veil; with Him in the life of glory at last! O blessed Jesu, our Life, our Saviour, our King, be Thou ever with us that we may be ever with Thee. Be Thou with us in joy and in sorrow, in strength and in weakness, in life and in death. Be Thou with us as we walk through the tangled paths of this sinful world; be Thou with us as we enter the valley of the shadow of death; be Thou with us in the peace of Paradise and the glories of heaven. O Father, hear Thy Son's prayer for those whom Thou hast given Him, that they may be with Him where He is, now and evermore Amen.

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